DELPHI POETS SERIES

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

DELPHI CLASSICS

DELPHI POETS SERIES

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

(1792-1822)

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PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY By John Addington Symonds

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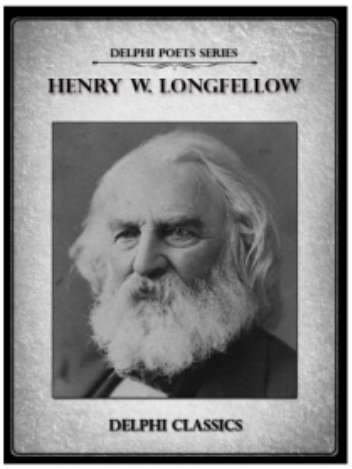

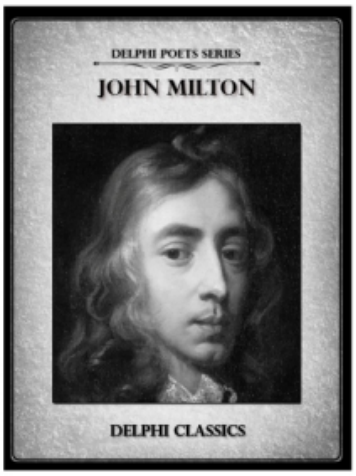

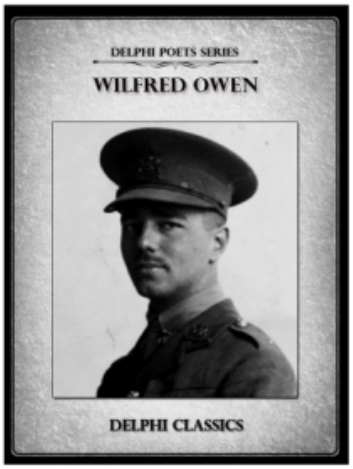

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DELPHI POETS SERIES

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

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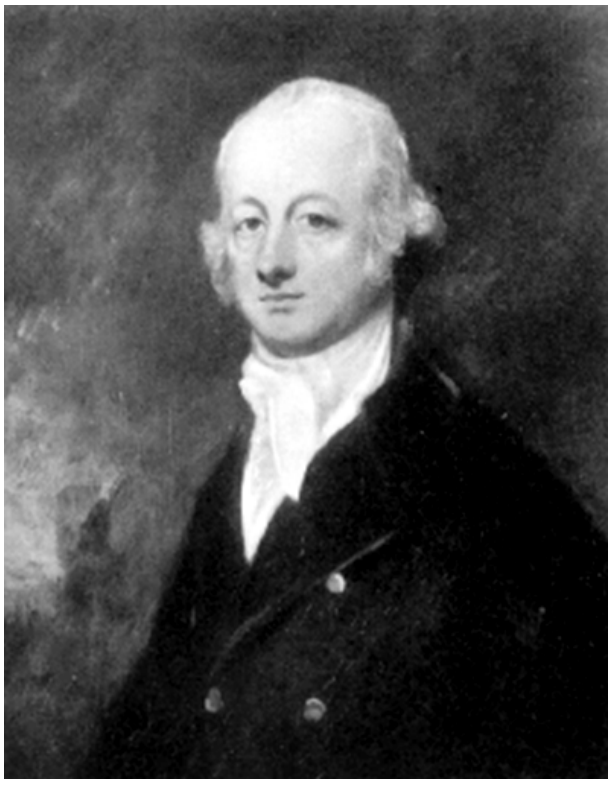
NOTE

When reading poetry on an eReader, it is advisable to use a small font size, which will allow the lines of poetry to display correctly.

The Poetry Collections

Field Place, Broadbridge Heath, West Sussex — Shelley's birthplace

Shelley, aged 12



The poet's father, Timothy Shelley — a Whig Member of Parliament

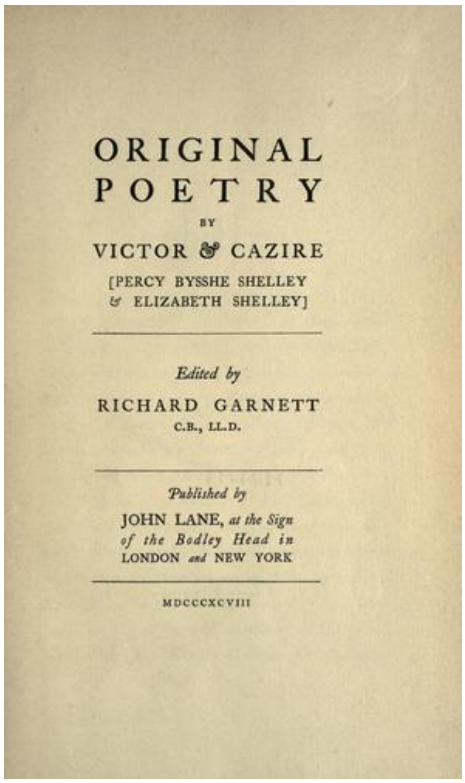
ORIGINAL POETRY BY VICTOR AND CAZIRE

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822) was born at Field Place, Warnham, near Horsham, being the eldest son of Sir Timothy Shelley and Elizabeth, daughter of Charles Pilfold. Shelley grew up to be a remarkably gentle and generous young man, who devoutly believed in non-violence and practised vegetarianism. However, he was often criticised for his lack of adherence to duty and responsibility, often seen as revolting against authority. While at Oxford University, Shelley was accused of Atheism following the publication of *Queen Mab*, which he had printed for private circulation. Although Shelley lived a short life, it was a very prolific one, which saw the creation of hundreds of individual poems, several plays, novels and a range of political essays.

Published anonymously in 1810, the following collection was Shelley's first printed volume of poetry. He wrote the poems in collaboration with his sister Elizabeth, while still officially studying at Oxford. The volume consists of sixteen poems, with Shelley contributing seven lyrical poems, four Gothic poems and the political poem *The Irishman's Song*, while his sister contributed three lyrical poems and two verse epistles.

Controversy surrounded the work due to one of the poems, *Saint Edmond's Eve*, actually being written by Matthew Gregory Lewis, having previously appeared in *Tales of Terror* (1801). Shelley told his publisher that Elizabeth had included the Lewis poem and apologised, asking Stockdale to suppress the volume, but fourteen hundred and eighty copies had already been printed and one hundred copies had been circulated. Fearing a plagiarism lawsuit, Stockdale withdrew the work from publication at once. Copies of the collection became extremely rare and it soon fell into obscurity.

The volume was advertised in the *Morning Chronicle* of September 18 as well as several other leading periodicals. However, the reviews were negative and highly critical, primarily focusing on Elizabeth's poems. One critic dismissed the collection as examples of "nonsensical rhyme", whilst the *British Critic* review described the collection as "filled up by songs of sentimental nonsense, and very absurd tales of horror."



ORIGINAL
POETRY
BY
VICTOR & CAZIRE
[PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY
& ELIZABETH SHELLEY]

Edited by
RICHARD GARNETT
C.B., LL.D.

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The first edition's title page

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UNTITLED.

A Person complained that whenever he began to write, he never could arrange his ideas in grammatical order. Which occasion suggested the idea of the following lines:

1.
Here I sit with my paper, my pen and my ink,
First of this thing, and that thing, and t'other thing think;
Then my thoughts come so pell-mell all into my mind,
That the sense or the subject I never can find:
This word is wrong placed, — no regard to the sense,
The present and future, instead of past tense,
Then my grammar I want; O dear! what a bore,
I think I shall never attempt to write more,
With patience I then my thoughts must arraign,
Have them all in due order like mutes in a train,
Like them too must wait in due patience and thought,
Or else my fine works will all come to nought.
My wit too's so copious, it flows like a river,
But disperses its waters on black and white never;
Like smoke it appears independent and free,
But ah luckless smoke! it all passes like thee —
Then at length all my patience entirely lost,
My paper and pens in the fire are tossed;
But come, try again — you must never despair,
Our Murray's or Entick's are not all so rare,
Implore their assistance — they'll come to your aid,
Perform all your business without being paid,
They'll tell you the present tense, future and past,
Which should come first, and which should come last,
This Murray will do — then to Entick repair,
To find out the meaning of any word rare.
This they friendly will tell, and ne'er make you blush,
With a jeering look, taunt, or an O fie! tush!
Then straight all your thoughts in black and white put,

Not minding the if's, the be's, and the but,
Then read it all over, see how it will run,
How answers the wit, the retort, and the pun,
Your writings may then with old Socrates vie,
May on the same shelf with Demosthenes lie,
May as Junius be sharp, or as Plato be sage.
The pattern or satire to all of the age;
But stop — a mad author I mean not to turn,
Nor with thirst of applause does my heated brain burn,
Sufficient that sense, wit, and grammar combined,
My letters may make some slight food for the mind;
That my thoughts to my friends I may freely impart,
In all the warm language that flows from the heart.
Hark! futurity calls! it loudly complains,
It bids me step forward and just hold the reins,
My excuse shall be humble, and faithful, and true,
Such as I fear can be made but by few —
Of writers this age has abundance and plenty,
Three score and a thousand, two millions and twenty,
Three score of them wits who all sharply vie,
To try what odd creature they best can belie,
A thousand are prudes who for CHARITY write,
And fill up their sheets with spleen, envy, and spite*(,)*
One million are bards, who to Heaven aspire,
And stuff their works full of bombast, rant, and fire,
T'other million are wags who in Grubstreet attend,
And just like a cobbler the old writings mend,
The twenty are those who for pulpits indite,
And pore over sermons all Saturday night.
And now my good friends — who come after I mean,
As I ne'er wore a cassock, or dined with a dean.
Or like cobblers at mending I never did try,
Nor with poets in lyrics attempted to vie;
As for prudes these good souls I both hate and detest,
So here I believe the matter must rest. —
I've heard your complaint — my answer I've made,
And since to your calls all the tribute I've paid,

Adieu my good friend; pray never despair,
But grammar and sense and everything dare,
Attempt but to write dashing, easy, and free,
Then take out your grammar and pay him his fee,
Be not a coward, shrink not to a tense,
But read it all over and make it out sense.
What a tiresome girl! — pray soon make an end,
Else my limited patience you'll quickly expend.
Well adieu, I no longer your patience will try —
So swift to the post now the letter shall fly.

JANUARY, 1810.

TO MISS —— (HARRIET GROVE) FROM MISS —— (ELIZABETH SHELLEY).

For your letter, dear — *(Hattie)*, accept my best thanks,
Rendered long and amusing by virtue of franks,
Though concise they would please, yet the longer the better,
The more news that's crammed in, more amusing the letter,
All excuses of etiquette nonsense I hate,
Which only are fit for the tardy and late,
As when converse grows flat, of the weather they talk,
How fair the sun shines — a fine day for a walk,
Then to politics turn, of Burdett's reformation,
One declares it would hurt, t'other better the nation,
Will ministers keep? sure they've acted quite wrong,
The burden this is of each morning-call song.
So — is going to — you say,
I hope that success her great efforts will pay *(—)*
That *(the Colonel)* will see her, be dazzled outright,
And declare he can't bear to be out of her sight.
Write flaming epistles with love's pointed dart,
Whose sharp little arrow struck right on his heart,
Scold poor innocent Cupid for mischievous ways,
He knows not how much to laud forth her praise,
That he neither eats, drinks or sleeps for her sake,
And hopes her hard heart some compassion will take,
A refusal would kill him, so desperate his flame,
But he fears, for he knows she is not common game,
Then praises her sense, wit, discernment and grace,
He's not one that's caught by a sly looking face,
Yet that's TOO divine — such a black sparkling eye,
At the bare glance of which near a thousand will die;
Thus runs he on meaning but one word in ten,
More than is meant by most such kind of men,
For they're all alike, take them one with another,
Begging pardon — with the exception of my brother.
Of the drawings you mention much praise I have heard,

Most opinion's the same, with the difference of word,
Some get a good name by the voice of the crowd,
Whilst to poor humble merit small praise is allowed,
As in parliament votes, so in pictures a name,
Oft determines a fate at the altar of fame. —
So on Friday this City's gay vortex you quit,
And no longer with Doctors and Johnny cats sit —
Now your parcel's arrived — *(Bysshe's)* letter shall go,
I hope all your joy mayn't be turned into woe,
Experience will tell you that pleasure is vain,
When it promises sunshine how often comes rain.
So when to fond hope every blessing is nigh,
How oft when we smile it is checked with a sigh,
When Hope, gay deceiver, in pleasure is dressed,
How oft comes a stroke that may rob us of rest.
When we think ourselves safe, and the goal near at hand,
Like a vessel just landing, we're wrecked near the strand,
And though memory forever the sharp pang must feel,
'Tis our duty to bear, and our hardship to steel —
May misfortunes dear Girl, ne'er thy happiness cloy,
May thy days glide in peace, love, comfort and joy,
May thy tears with soft pity for other woes flow,
Woes, which thy tender heart never may know,
For hardships our own, God has taught us to bear,
Though sympathy's soul to a friend drops a tear.
Oh dear! what sentimental stuff have I written,
Only fit to tear up and play with a kitten.
What sober reflections in the midst of this letter!
Jocularity sure would have suited much better;
But there are exceptions to all common rules,
For this is a truth by all boys learned at schools.
Now adieu my dear — *(Hattie)* I'm sure I must tire,
For if I do, you may throw it into the fire,
So accept the best love of your cousin and friend,
Which brings this nonsensical rhyme to an end.

APRIL 30, 1810.

SONG. COLD, COLD IS THE BLAST WHEN DECEMBER IS HOWLING

Cold, cold is the blast when December is howling,
Cold are the damps on a dying man's brow, —
Stern are the seas when the wild waves are rolling,
And sad is the grave where a loved one lies low;
But colder is scorn from the being who loved thee,
More stern is the sneer from the friend who has proved thee,
More sad are the tears when their sorrows have moved thee,
Which mixed with groans anguish and wild madness flow —

And ah! poor — has felt all this horror,
Full long the fallen victim contended with fate:
'Till a destitute outcast abandoned to sorrow,
She sought her babe's food at her ruiner's gate —
Another had charmed the remorseless betrayer,
He turned laughing aside from her moans and her prayer,
She said nothing, but wringing the wet from her hair,
Crossed the dark mountain side, though the hour it was late.
'Twas on the wild height of the dark Penmanmawr,
That the form of the wasted — reclined;
She shrieked to the ravens that croaked from afar,
And she sighed to the gusts of the wild sweeping wind. —
I call not yon rocks where the thunder peals rattle,
I call not yon clouds where the elements battle,
But thee, cruel — I call thee unkind!' —

Then she wreathed in her hair the wild flowers of the mountain,
And deliriously laughing, a garland entwined,
She bedewed it with tears, then she hung o'er the fountain,
And leaving it, cast it a prey to the wind.
'Ah! go,' she exclaimed, 'when the tempest is yelling,
'Tis unkind to be cast on the sea that is swelling,
But I left, a pitiless outcast, my dwelling,
My garments are torn, so they say is my mind—'

Not long lived — , but over her grave
Waved the desolate form of a storm-blasted yew,
Around it no demons or ghosts dare to rave,
But spirits of peace steep her slumbers in dew.
Then stay thy swift steps mid the dark mountain heather,
Though chill blow the wind and severe is the weather,
For perfidy, traveller! cannot bereave her,
Of the tears, to the tombs of the innocent due. —

JULY, 1810.

SONG. COME *(HARRIET)*! SWEET IS THE HOUR

Come *(Harriet)*! sweet is the hour,
Soft Zephyrs breathe gently around,
The anemone's night-boding flower,
Has sunk its pale head on the ground.

'Tis thus the world's keenness hath torn,
Some mild heart that expands to its blast,
'Tis thus that the wretched forlorn,
Sinks poor and neglected at last. —

The world with its keenness and woe,
Has no charms or attraction for me,
Its unkindness with grief has laid low,
The heart which is faithful to thee.
The high trees that wave past the moon,
As I walk in their umbrage with you,
All declare I must part with you soon,
All bid you a tender adieu! —

Then *(Harriet)*! dearest farewell,
You and I love, may ne'er meet again;
These woods and these meadows can tell
How soft and how sweet was the strain. —

APRIL, 1810.

SONG. DESPAIR.

Ask not the pallid stranger's woe,
With beating heart and throbbing breast,
Whose step is faltering, weak, and slow,
As though the body needed rest. —

Whose 'wildered eye no object meets,
Nor cares to ken a friendly glance,
With silent grief his bosom beats, —
Now fixed, as in a deathlike trance.

Who looks around with fearful eye,
And shuns all converse with man kind,
As though some one his griefs might spy,
And soothe them with a kindred mind.

A friend or foe to him the same,
He looks on each with equal eye;
The difference lies but in the name,
To none for comfort can he fly. —

'Twas deep despair, and sorrow's trace,
To him too keenly given,
Whose memory, time could not efface —
His peace was lodged in Heaven. —

He looks on all this world bestows,
The pride and pomp of power,
As trifles best for pageant shows
Which vanish in an hour.

When torn is dear affection's tie,
Sinks the soft heart full low;
It leaves without a parting sigh,
All that these realms bestow.

JUNE, 1810.

SONG. SORROW.

To me this world's a dreary blank,
All hopes in life are gone and fled,
My high strung energies are sank,
And all my blissful hopes lie dead. —

The world once smiling to my view,
Showed scenes of endless bliss and joy;
The world I then but little knew,
Ah! little knew how pleasures cloy;

All then was jocund, all was gay,
No thought beyond the present hour,
I danced in pleasure's fading ray,
Fading alas! as drooping flower.

Nor do the heedless in the throng,
One thought beyond the morrow give*(,)*
They court the feast, the dance, the song,
Nor think how short their time to live.

The heart that bears deep sorrow's trace,
What earthly comfort can console,
It drags a dull and lengthened pace,
'Till friendly death its woes enroll. —

The sunken cheek, the humid eyes,
E'en better than the tongue can tell;
In whose sad breast deep sorrow lies,
Where memory's rankling traces dwell. —

The rising tear, the stifled sigh,
A mind but ill at ease display,
Like blackening clouds in stormy sky,
Where fiercely vivid lightnings play.

Thus when souls' energy is dead,
When sorrow dims each earthly view,
When every fairy hope is fled,
We bid ungrateful world adieu.

AUGUST, 1810.

SONG. HOPE.

And said I that all hope was fled,
That sorrow and despair were mine,
That each enthusiast wish was dead,
Had sank beneath pale Misery's shrine. —

Seest thou the sunbeam's yellow glow,
That robes with liquid streams of light;
Yon distant Mountain's craggy brow.
And shows the rocks so fair, — so bright —

Tis thus sweet expectation's ray,
In softer view shows distant hours,
And portrays each succeeding day,
As dressed in fairer, brighter flowers, —

The vermeil tinted flowers that blossom;
Are frozen but to bud anew,
Then sweet deceiver calm my bosom,
Although thy visions be not true, —

Yet true they are, — and I'll believe,
Thy whisperings soft of love and peace,
God never made thee to deceive,
'Tis sin that bade thy empire cease.

Yet though despair my life should gloom,
Though horror should around me close,
With those I love, beyond the tomb,
Hope shows a balm for all my woes.

AUGUST, 1810.

SONG. OH! WHAT IS THE GAIN OF RESTLESS CARE

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN.

Oh! what is the gain of restless care,
And what is ambitious treasure?
And what are the joys that the modish share,
In their sickly haunts of pleasure?

My husband's repast with delight I spread,
What though 'tis but rustic fare,
May each guardian angel protect his shed,
May contentment and quiet be there.

And may I support my husband's years,
May I soothe his dying pain,
And then may I dry my fast falling tears,
And meet him in Heaven again.

JULY, 1810.

SONG. AH! GRASP THE DIRE DAGGER AND COUCH THE FELL SPEAR

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN.

Ah! grasp the dire dagger and couch the fell spear,
If vengeance and death to thy bosom be dear,
The dastard shall perish, death's torment shall prove,
For fate and revenge are decreed from above.

Ah! where is the hero, whose nerves strung by youth,
Will defend the firm cause of justice and truth;
With insatiate desire whose bosom shall swell,
To give up the oppressor to judgement and Hell —

For him shall the fair one twine chaplets of bays,
To him shall each warrior give merited praise,
And triumphant returned from the clangour of arms,
He shall find his reward in his loved maiden's charms.

In ecstatic confusion the warrior shall sip,
The kisses that glow on his love's dewy lip,
And mutual, eternal, embraces shall prove,
The rewards of the brave are the transports of love.

OCTOBER, 1809.

THE IRISHMAN'S SONG.

The stars may dissolve, and the fountain of light
May sink into ne'er ending chaos and night,
Our mansions must fall, and earth vanish away,
But thy courage O Erin! may never decay.

See! the wide wasting ruin extends all around,
Our ancestors' dwellings lie sunk on the ground,
Our foes ride in triumph throughout our domains,
And our mightiest heroes lie stretched on the plains.

Ah! dead is the harp which was wont to give pleasure,
Ah! sunk is our sweet country's rapturous measure,
But the war note is waked, and the clangour of spears,
The dread yell of Sloghan yet sounds in our ears.

Ah! where are the heroes! triumphant in death,
Convulsed they recline on the blood sprinkled heath,
Or the yelling ghosts ride on the blast that sweeps by,
And 'my countrymen! vengeance!' incessantly cry.

OCTOBER, 1809.

SONG. FIERCE ROARS THE MIDNIGHT STORM

Fierce roars the midnight storm
O'er the wild mountain,
Dark clouds the night deform,
Swift rolls the fountain —

See! o'er yon rocky height,
Dim mists are flying —
See by the moon's pale light,
Poor Laura's dying!

Shame and remorse shall howl,
By her false pillow —
Fiercer than storms that roll,
O'er the white billow;

No hand her eyes to close,
When life is flying,
But she will find repose,
For Laura's dying!

Then will I seek my love,
Then will I cheer her,
Then my esteem will prove,
When no friend is near her.

On her grave I will lie,
When life is parted,
On her grave I will die,
For the false hearted.

DECEMBER, 1809.

SONG. TO *(HARRIET)*.

Ah! sweet is the moonbeam that sleeps on yon fountain,
And sweet the mild rush of the soft-sighing breeze,
And sweet is the glimpse of yon dimly-seen mountain,
‘Neath the verdant arcades of yon shadowy trees.

But sweeter than all was thy tone of affection,
Which scarce seemed to break on the stillness of eve,
Though the time it is past! — yet the dear recollection,
For aye in the heart of thy *(Percy)* must live.

Yet he hears thy dear voice in the summer winds sighing,
Mild accents of happiness lisp in his ear,
When the hope-winged moments athwart him are flying,
And he thinks of the friend to his bosom so dear. —

And thou dearest friend in his bosom for ever
Must reign unalloyed by the fast rolling year,
He loves thee, and dearest one never, Oh! never
Canst thou cease to be loved by a heart so sincere.

AUGUST, 1810.

SONG. TO — *(HARRIET)*.

Stern, stern is the voice of fate's fearful command,
When accents of horror it breathes in our ear,
Or compels us for aye bid adieu to the land,
Where exists that loved friend to our bosom so dear,

'Tis sterner than death o'er the shuddering wretch bending,
And in skeleton grasp his fell sceptre extending,
Like the heart-stricken deer to that loved covert wending,
Which never again to his eyes may appear —

And ah! he may envy the heart-stricken quarry,
Who bids to the friend of affection farewell,
He may envy the bosom so bleeding and gory,
He may envy the sound of the drear passing knell,

Not so deep is his grief on his death couch reposing,
When on the last vision his dim eyes are closing!
As the outcast whose love-raptured senses are losing,
The last tones of thy voice on the wild breeze that swell!

Those tones were so soft, and so sad, that ah! never,
Can the sound cease to vibrate on Memory's ear,
In the stern wreck of Nature for ever and ever,
The remembrance must live of a friend so sincere.

AUGUST, 1810.

SAINT EDMOND'S EVE.

Oh! did you observe the Black Canon pass,
And did you observe his frown?
He goeth to say the midnight mass,
In holy St. Edmond's town.

He goeth to sing the burial chaunt,
And to lay the wandering sprite,
Whose shadowy, restless form doth haunt,
The Abbey's drear aisle this night.

It saith it will not its wailing cease,
'Till that holy man come near,
'Till he pour o'er its grave the prayer of peace,
And sprinkle the hallowed tear.

The Canon's horse is stout and strong
The road is plain and fair,
But the Canon slowly wends along,
And his brow is gloomed with care.

Who is it thus late at the Abbey-gate?
Sullen echoes the portal bell,
It sounds like the whispering voice of fate,
It sounds like a funeral knell.

The Canon his faltering knee thrice bowed,
And his frame was convulsed with fear,
When a voice was heard distinct and loud,
'Prepare! for thy hour is near.'

He crosses his breast, he mutters a prayer,
To Heaven he lifts his eye,
He heeds not the Abbot's gazing stare,
Nor the dark Monks who murmured by.

Bare-headed he worships the sculptured saints
That frown on the sacred walls,
His face it grows pale, — he trembles, he faints,
At the Abbot's feet he falls.

And straight the father's robe he kissed,
Who cried, 'Grace dwells with thee,
The spirit will fade like the morning mist,
At your benedicite.

'Now haste within! the board is spread,
Keen blows the air, and cold,
The spectre sleeps in its earthy bed,
'Till St. Edmond's bell hath tolled, —

'Yet rest your wearied limbs to-night,
You've journeyed many a mile,
To-morrow lay the wailing sprite,
That shrieks in the moonlight aisle.

'Oh! faint are my limbs and my bosom is cold,
Yet to-night must the sprite be laid,
Yet to-night when the hour of horror's told,
Must I meet the wandering shade.

'Nor food, nor rest may now delay, —
For hark! the echoing pile,
A bell loud shakes! — Oh haste away,
O lead to the haunted aisle.'

The torches slowly move before,
The cross is raised on high,
A smile of peace the Canon wore,
But horror dimmed his eye —

And now they climb the footworn stair,
The chapel gates unclose,

Now each breathed low a fervent prayer,
And fear each bosom froze —

Now paused awhile the doubtful band
And viewed the solemn scene, —
Full dark the clustered columns stand,
The moon gleams pale between —

‘Say father, say, what cloisters’ gloom
Conceals the unquiet shade,
Within what dark unhallowed tomb,
The corse unblessed was laid.’

‘Through yonder drear aisle alone it walks,
And murmurs a mournful plaint,
Of thee! Black Canon, it wildly talks,
And call on thy patron saint —

The pilgrim this night with wondering eyes,
As he prayed at St. Edmond’s shrine,
From a black marble tomb hath seen it rise,
And under yon arch recline.’ —

‘Oh! say upon that black marble tomb,
What memorial sad appears.’ —
‘Undistinguished it lies in the chancel’s gloom,
No memorial sad it bears’ —

The Canon his paternoster reads,
His rosary hung by his side,
Now swift to the chancel doors he leads,
And untouched they open wide,

Resistless, strange sounds his steps impel,
To approach to the black marble tomb,
‘Oh! enter, Black Canon,’ a whisper fell,
‘Oh! enter, thy hour is come.’

He paused, told his beads, and the threshold passed.
Oh! horror, the chancel doors close,
A loud yell was borne on the rising blast,
And a deep, dying groan arose.

The Monks in amazement shuddering stand,
They burst through the chancel's gloom,
From St. Edmond's shrine, lo! a skeleton's hand,
Points to the black marble tomb.

Lo! deeply engraved, an inscription blood red,
In characters fresh and clear —
'The guilty Black Canon of Elmham's dead,
And his wife lies buried here!'

In Elmham's tower he wedded a Nun,
To St. Edmond's his bride he bore,
On this eve her noviciate here was begun,
And a Monk's gray weeds she wore; —

O! deep was her conscience dyed with guilt,
Remorse she full oft revealed,
Her blood by the ruthless Black Canon was spilt,
And in death her lips he sealed;

Her spirit to penance this night was doomed,
'Till the Canon atoned the deed,
Here together they now shall rest entombed,
'Till their bodies from dust are freed —

Hark! a loud peal of thunder shakes the roof,
Round the altar bright lightnings play,
Speechless with horror the Monks stand aloof,
And the storm dies sudden away —

The inscription was gone! a cross on the ground,
And a rosary shone through the gloom,

But never again was the Canon there found,
Or the Ghost on the black marble tomb. 120

REVENGE.

‘Ah! quit me not yet, for the wind whistles shrill,
Its blast wanders mournfully over the hill,
The thunder’s wild voice rattles madly above,
You will not then, cannot then, leave me my love.—’

I must dearest Agnes, the night is far gone —
I must wander this evening to Strasburg alone,
I must seek the drear tomb of my ancestors’ bones,
And must dig their remains from beneath the cold stones.

‘For the spirit of Conrad there meets me this night,
And we quit not the tomb ‘till dawn of the light,
And Conrad’s been dead just a month and a day!
So farewell dearest Agnes for I must away, —

‘He bid me bring with me what most I held dear,
Or a month from that time should I lie on my bier,
And I’d sooner resign this false fluttering breath,
Than my Agnes should dread either danger or death,

‘And I love you to madness my Agnes I love,
My constant affection this night will I prove,
This night will I go to the sepulchre’s jaw
Alone will I glut its all conquering maw’ —

‘No! no loved Adolphus thy Agnes will share,
In the tomb all the dangers that wait for you there,
I fear not the spirit, — I fear not the grave,
My dearest Adolphus I’d perish to save’ —

‘Nay seek not to say that thy love shall not go,
But spare me those ages of horror and woe,
For I swear to thee here that I’ll perish ere day,
If you go unattended by Agnes away’ —

The night it was bleak the fierce storm raged around,
The lightning's blue fire-light flashed on the ground,
Strange forms seemed to flit, — and howl tidings of fate,
As Agnes advanced to the sepulchre gate. —

The youth struck the portal, — the echoing sound
Was fearfully rolled midst the tombstones around,
The blue lightning gleamed o'er the dark chapel spire,
And tinged were the storm clouds with sulphurous fire.

Still they gazed on the tombstone where Conrad reclined,
Yet they shrank at the cold chilling blast of the wind,
When a strange silver brilliance pervaded the scene,
And a figure advanced — tall in form — fierce in mien.

A mantle encircled his shadowy form,
As light as a gossamer borne on the storm,
Celestial terror sat throned in his gaze,
Like the midnight pestiferous meteor's blaze. —

SPIRIT:
Thy father, Adolphus! was false, false as hell,
And Conrad has cause to remember it well,
He ruined my Mother, despised me his son,
I quitted the world ere my vengeance was done.

I was nearly expiring—'twas close of the day, —
A demon advanced to the bed where I lay,
He gave me the power from whence I was hurled,
To return to revenge, to return to the world, —

Now Adolphus I'll seize thy best loved in my arms,
I'll drag her to Hades all blooming in charms,
On the black whirlwind's thundering pinion I'll ride,
And fierce yelling fiends shall exult o'er thy bride —

He spoke, and extending his ghastly arms wide,
Majestic advanced with a swift noiseless stride,

He clasped the fair Agnes — he raised her on high,
And cleaving the roof sped his way to the sky —

All was now silent, — and over the tomb,
Thicker, deeper, was swiftly extended a gloom,
Adolphus in horror sank down on the stone,
And his fleeting soul fled with a harrowing groan.

DECEMBER, 1809.

GHASTA OR, THE AVENGING DEMON!!!

The idea of the following tale was taken from a few unconnected German Stanzas. — The principal Character is evidently the Wandering Jew, and although not mentioned by name, the burning Cross on his forehead undoubtedly alludes to that superstition, so prevalent in the part of Germany called the Black Forest, where this scene is supposed to lie.

Hark! the owlet flaps her wing,
In the pathless dell beneath,
Hark! night ravens loudly sing,
Tidings of despair and death. —

Horror covers all the sky,
Clouds of darkness blot the moon,
Prepare! for mortal thou must die,
Prepare to yield thy soul up soon —

Fierce the tempest raves around,
Fierce the volleyed lightnings fly,
Crashing thunder shakes the ground,
Fire and tumult fill the sky. —

Hark! the tolling village bell,
Tells the hour of midnight come,
Now can blast the powers of Hell,
Fiend-like goblins now can roam —

See! his crest all stained with rain,
A warrior hastening speeds his way,
He starts, looks round him, starts again,
And sighs for the approach of day.

See! his frantic steed he reins,
See! he lifts his hands on high,
Implores a respite to his pains,
From the powers of the sky. —

He seeks an Inn, for faint from toil,
Fatigue had bent his lofty form,
To rest his wearied limbs awhile,
Fatigued with wandering and the storm.

… …

Slow the door is opened wide —
With trackless tread a stranger came,
His form Majestic, slow his stride,
He sate, nor spake, — nor told his name —

Terror blanched the warrior's cheek,
Cold sweat from his forehead ran,
In vain his tongue essayed to speak, —
At last the stranger thus began:

'Mortal! thou that saw'st the sprite,
Tell me what I wish to know,
Or come with me before 'tis light,
Where cypress trees and mandrakes grow.

'Fierce the avenging Demon's ire,
Fiercer than the wintry blast,
Fiercer than the lightning's fire,
When the hour of twilight's past' —

The warrior raised his sunken eye.
It met the stranger's sullen scowl,
'Mortal! Mortal! thou must die,'
In burning letters chilled his soul.

WARRIOR:
Stranger! whoso'er you are,
I feel impelled my tale to tell —
Horrors stranger shalt thou hear,
Horrors drear as those of Hell.

O’er my Castle silence reigned,
Late the night and drear the hour,
When on the terrace I observed,
A fleeting shadowy mist to lower. —

Light the cloud as summer fog,
Which transient shuns the morning beam;
Fleeting as the cloud on bog,
That hangs or on the mountain stream. —

Horror seized my shuddering brain,
Horror dimmed my starting eye.
In vain I tried to speak, — In vain
My limbs essayed the spot to fly —

At last the thin and shadowy form,
With noiseless, trackless footsteps came, —
Its light robe floated on the storm,
Its head was bound with lambent flame.

In chilling voice drear as the breeze
Which sweeps along th’ autumnal ground,
Which wanders through the leafless trees,
Or the mandrake’s groan which floats around.

‘Thou art mine and I am thine,
‘Till the sinking of the world,
I am thine and thou art mine,
‘Till in ruin death is hurled —

‘Strong the power and dire the fate,
Which drags me from the depths of Hell,
Breaks the tomb’s eternal gate,
Where fiendish shapes and dead men yell,

‘Haply I might ne’er have shrank
From flames that rack the guilty dead,

Haply I might ne’er have sank
On pleasure’s flowery, thorny bed —

—’But stay! no more I dare disclose,
Of the tale I wish to tell,
On Earth relentless were my woes,
But fiercer are my pangs in Hell —

‘Now I claim thee as my love,
Lay aside all chilling fear,
My affection will I prove,
Where sheeted ghosts and spectres are!

‘For thou art mine, and I am thine,
‘Till the dreaded judgement day,
I am thine, and thou art mine —
Night is past — I must away.’

Still I gazed, and still the form
Pressed upon my aching sight,
Still I braved the howling storm,
When the ghost dissolved in night. —

Restless, sleepless fled the night,
Sleepless as a sick man’s bed,
When he sighs for morning light,
When he turns his aching head, —

Slow and painful passed the day.
Melancholy seized my brain,
Lingering fled the hours away,
Lingering to a wretch in pain. —

At last came night, ah! horrid hour,
Ah! chilling time that wakes the dead,
When demons ride the clouds that lower,
— The phantom sat upon my bed.

In hollow voice, low as the sound
Which in some charnel makes its moan,
What floats along the burying ground,
The phantom claimed me as her own.

Her chilling finger on my head,
With coldest touch congealed my soul —
Cold as the finger of the dead,
Or damps which round a tombstone roll —

Months are passed in lingering round,
Every night the spectre comes,
With thrilling step it shakes the ground,
With thrilling step it round me roams —

Stranger! I have told to thee,
All the tale I have to tell —
Stranger! canst thou tell to me,
How to ‘scape the powers of Hell? —

STRANGER:
Warrior! I can ease thy woes,
Wilt thou, wilt thou, come with me —
Warrior! I can all disclose,
Follow, follow, follow me.

Yet the tempest’s duskiest wing,
Its mantle stretches o’er the sky,
Yet the midnight ravens sing,
‘Mortal! Mortal! thou must die.’

At last they saw a river clear,
That crossed the heathy path they trod,
The Stranger’s look was wild and drear,
The firm Earth shook beneath his nod —

He raised a wand above his head,
He traced a circle on the plain,

In a wild verse he called the dead,
The dead with silent footsteps came.

A burning brilliance on his head,
Flaming filled the stormy air,
In a wild verse he called the dead,
The dead in motley crowd were there. —

‘Ghasta! Ghasta! come along,
Bring thy fiendish crowd with thee,
Quickly raise th’ avenging Song,
Ghasta! Ghasta! come to me.’

Horrid shapes in mantles gray,
Flit athwart the stormy night,
‘Ghasta! Ghasta! come away,
Come away before ‘tis light.’

See! the sheeted Ghost they bring,
Yelling dreadful o’er the heath,
Hark! the deadly verse they sing,
Tidings of despair and death!

The yelling Ghost before him stands,
See! she rolls her eyes around,
Now she lifts her bony hands,
Now her footsteps shake the ground.

STRANGER:
Phantom of Theresa say,
Why to earth again you came,
Quickly speak, I must away!
Or you must bleach for aye in flame, —

PHANTOM:
Mighty one I know thee now,
Mightiest power of the sky,

Know thee by thy flaming brow,
Know thee by thy sparkling eye.

That fire is scorching! Oh! I came,
From the caverned depth of Hell,
My fleeting false Rodolph to claim,
Mighty one! I know thee well. —

STRANGER:
Ghasta! seize yon wandering sprite,
Drag her to the depth beneath,
Take her swift, before ‘tis light,
Take her to the cells of death!

Thou that heardst the trackless dead,
In the mouldering tomb must lie,
Mortal! look upon my head,
Mortal! Mortal! thou must die.

Of glowing flame a cross was there,
Which threw a light around his form,
Whilst his lank and raven hair,
Floated wild upon the storm. —

The warrior upwards turned his eyes,
Gazed upon the cross of fire,
There sat horror and surprise,
There sat God’s eternal ire. —

A shivering through the Warrior flew,
Colder than the nightly blast,
Colder than the evening dew,
When the hour of twilight’s past. —

Thunder shakes th’ expansive sky,
Shakes the bosom of the heath,
‘Mortal! Mortal! thou must die’ —
The warrior sank convulsed in death.

JANUARY, 1810.

FRAGMENT, OR THE TRIUMPH OF CONSCIENCE.

‘Twas dead of the night when I sate in my dwelling,
One glimmering lamp was expiring and low, —
Around the dark tide of the tempest was swelling,
Along the wild mountains night-ravens were yelling,
They bodingly presaged destruction and woe!

‘Twas then that I started, the wild storm was howling,
Nought was seen, save the lightning that danced on the sky,
Above me the crash of the thunder was rolling,
And low, chilling murmurs the blast wafted by. —

My heart sank within me, unheeded the jar
Of the battling clouds on the mountain-tops broke,
Unheeded the thunder-peal crashed in mine ear,
This heart hard as iron was stranger to fear,
But conscience in low noiseless whispering spoke.
‘Twas then that her form on the whirlwind uprearing,
The dark ghost of the murdered Victoria strode,
Her right hand a blood reeking dagger was bearing,
She swiftly advanced to my lonesome abode. —
I wildly then called on the tempest to bear me!

… …

POSTHUMOUS FRAGMENTS OF MARGARET NICHOLSON

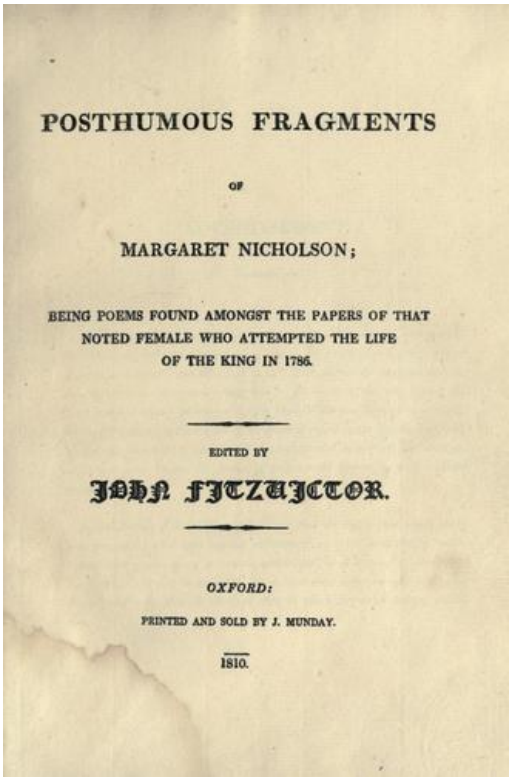
Being Poems found amongst the Papers of that Noted Female who attempted the Life of the King in 1786. Edited by John Fitzvictor.

Shelley's second poetry collection was published in November, 1810, with collaborations from his friend Thomas Jefferson Hogg, who was a fellow student at Oxford. It was printed in pamphlet form by John Munday and Henry Slatter, consisting of fictional fragments that were in the nature of a burlesque. The collection was one Shelley's earliest political works, expressing his views on government, war and society in general.

Shelley and Hogg presented the poems as being written by Margaret Nicholson herself and edited by her nephew, John FitzVictor, published after her death. John FitzVictor was not a real person, but created by Shelley and Hogg, as a play of words on the co-author of *Original Poetry by Victor and Cazire*. Margaret Nicholson was a real person who is most remembered today due to this collection, though she had attempted to assassinate King George III with a knife in 1786.

In the poems Shelley attacks the British monarchy as oppressive and burdensome on the people. He expresses his anti-war views, blaming absolutist and monarchist governments for causing needless wars. These political views would be developed further and to greater effect in *Queen Mab* in 1812.

The collection was published in a limited run of 250 copies, achieving little interest, and was not reprinted until 1877 by Harry Buxton Forman, making it one of the most obscure of Shelley's works.



POSTHUMOUS FRAGMENTS

OF

MARGARET NICHOLSON;

BEING POEMS FOUND AMONGST THE PAPERS OF THAT NOTED FEMALE WHO ATTEMPTED THE LIFE OF THE KING IN 1786.

EDITED BY

JOHN FITZVICTOR.

OXFORD:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY J. MUNDAY.

1810.

The original title page

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Margaret Nicholson attempting to assassinate his Majesty King George III, 1786

ADVERTISEMENT.

The energy and native genius of these Fragments must be the only apology which the Editor can make for thus intruding them on the public notice. The first I found with no title, and have left it so. It is intimately connected with the dearest interests of universal happiness; and much as we may deplore the fatal and enthusiastic tendency which the ideas of this poor female had acquired, we cannot fail to pay the tribute of unequivocal regret to the departed memory of genius, which, had it been rightly organized, would have made that intellect, which has since become the victim of frenzy and despair, a most brilliant ornament to society.

In case the sale of these Fragments evinces that the public have any curiosity to be presented with a more copious collection of my unfortunate Aunt's poems, I have other papers in my possession which shall, in that case, be subjected to their notice. It may be supposed they require much arrangement; but I send the following to the press in the same state in which they came into my possession. J. F.

WAR.

Ambition, power, and avarice, now have hurled
Death, fate, and ruin, on a bleeding world.
See! on yon heath what countless victims lie,
Hark! what loud shrieks ascend through yonder sky;
Tell then the cause, ‘tis sure the avenger’s rage
Has swept these myriads from life’s crowded stage:
Hark to that groan, an anguished hero dies,
He shudders in death’s latest agonies;
Yet does a fleeting hectic flush his cheek,
Yet does his parting breath essay to speak —
‘Oh God! my wife, my children — Monarch thou
For whose support this fainting frame lies low;
For whose support in distant lands I bleed,
Let his friends’ welfare be the warrior’s meed.
He hears me not — ah! no — kings cannot hear,
For passion’s voice has dulled their listless ear.
To thee, then, mighty God, I lift my moan,
Thou wilt not scorn a suppliant’s anguished groan.
Oh! now I die — but still is death’s fierce pain —
God hears my prayer — we meet, we meet again.’
He spake, reclined him on death’s bloody bed,
And with a parting groan his spirit fled.
Oppressors of mankind to YOU we owe
The baleful streams from whence these miseries flow;
For you how many a mother weeps her son,
Snatched from life’s course ere half his race was run!
For you how many a widow drops a tear,
In silent anguish, on her husband’s bier!
‘Is it then Thine, Almighty Power,’ she cries,
‘Whence tears of endless sorrow dim these eyes?
Is this the system which Thy powerful sway,
Which else in shapeless chaos sleeping lay,
Formed and approved? — it cannot be — but oh!
Forgive me, Heaven, my brain is warped by woe.’

‘Tis not — He never bade the war-note swell,
He never triumphed in the work of hell —
Monarchs of earth! thine is the baleful deed,
Thine are the crimes for which thy subjects bleed.
Ah! when will come the sacred fated time,
When man unsullied by his leaders’ crime,
Despising wealth, ambition, pomp, and pride,
Will stretch him fearless by his foe-men’s side?
Ah! when will come the time, when o’er the plain
No more shall death and desolation reign?
When will the sun smile on the bloodless field,
And the stern warrior’s arm the sickle wield?
Not whilst some King, in cold ambition’s dreams,
Plans for the field of death his plodding schemes;
Not whilst for private pique the public fall,
And one frail mortal’s mandate governs all.
Swelled with command and mad with dizzying sway;
Who sees unmoved his myriads fade away.
Careless who lives or dies — so that he gains
Some trivial point for which he took the pains.
What then are Kings? — I see the trembling crowd,
I hear their fulsome clamours echoed loud;
Their stern oppressor pleased appears awhile,
But April’s sunshine is a Monarch’s smile —
Kings are but dust — the last eventful day
Will level all and make them lose their sway;
Will dash the sceptre from the Monarch’s hand,
And from the warrior’s grasp wrest the ensanguined brand.
Oh! Peace, soft Peace, art thou for ever gone,
Is thy fair form indeed for ever flown?
And love and concord hast thou swept away,
As if incongruous with thy parted sway?
Alas, I fear thou hast, for none appear.
Now o’er the palsied earth stalks giant Fear,
With War, and Woe, and Terror, in his train; —
List’ning he pauses on the embattled plain,
Then speeding swiftly o’er the ensanguined heath,

Has left the frightful work to Hell and Death.
See! gory Ruin yokes his blood-stained car,
He scents the battle's carnage from afar;
Hell and Destruction mark his mad career,
He tracks the rapid step of hurrying Fear;
Whilst ruined towns and smoking cities tell,
That thy work, Monarch, is the work of Hell.
'It is thy work!' I hear a voice repeat,
Shakes the broad basis of thy bloodstained seat;
And at the orphan's sigh, the widow's moan,
Totters the fabric of thy guilt-stained throne —
'It is thy work, O Monarch;' now the sound
Fainter and fainter, yet is borne around,
Yet to enthusiast ears the murmurs tell
That Heaven, indignant at the work of Hell,
Will soon the cause, the hated cause remove,
Which tears from earth peace, innocence, and love.

FRAGMENT: SUPPOSED TO BE AN EPITHALAMIUM OF FRANCIS RAVAILLAC AND CHARLOTTE CORDAY.

‘Tis midnight now — athwart the murky air,
Dank lurid meteors shoot a livid gleam;
From the dark storm-clouds flashes a fearful glare,
It shows the bending oak, the roaring stream.

I pondered on the woes of lost mankind,
I pondered on the ceaseless rage of Kings;
My rapt soul dwelt upon the ties that bind
The mazy volume of commingling things,
When fell and wild misrule to man stern sorrow brings.

I heard a yell — it was not the knell,
When the blasts on the wild lake sleep,
That floats on the pause of the summer gale’s swell,
O’er the breast of the waveless deep.

I thought it had been death’s accents cold
That bade me recline on the shore;
I laid mine hot head on the surge-beaten mould,
And thought to breathe no more.

But a heavenly sleep
That did suddenly steep
In balm my bosom’s pain,
Pervaded my soul,
And free from control,
Did mine intellect range again.

Methought enthroned upon a silvery cloud,
Which floated mid a strange and brilliant light;
My form upborne by viewless aether rode,
And spurned the lessening realms of earthly night.
What heavenly notes burst on my ravished ears,
What beauteous spirits met my dazzled eye!

Hark! louder swells the music of the spheres,
More clear the forms of speechless bliss float by,
And heavenly gestures suit aethereal melody.

But fairer than the spirits of the air,
More graceful than the Sylph of symmetry,
Than the enthusiast's fancied love more fair,
Were the bright forms that swept the azure sky.
Enthroned in roseate light, a heavenly band
Strewed flowers of bliss that never fade away;
They welcome virtue to its native land,
And songs of triumph greet the joyous day
When endless bliss the woes of fleeting life repay.

Congenial minds will seek their kindred soul,
E'en though the tide of time has rolled between;
They mock weak matter's impotent control,
And seek of endless life the eternal scene.
At death's vain summons THIS will never die,
In Nature's chaos THIS will not decay —
These are the bands which closely, warmly, tie
Thy soul, O Charlotte, 'yond this chain of clay,
To him who thine must be till time shall fade away.

Yes, Francis! thine was the dear knife that tore
A tyrant's heart-strings from his guilty breast,
Thine was the daring at a tyrant's gore,
To smile in triumph, to contemn the rest;
And thine, loved glory of thy sex! to tear
From its base shrine a despot's haughty soul,
To laugh at sorrow in secure despair,
To mock, with smiles, life's lingering control,
And triumph mid the griefs that round thy fate did roll.

Yes! the fierce spirits of the avenging deep
With endless tortures goad their guilty shades.
I see the lank and ghastly spectres sweep
Along the burning length of yon arcades;

And I see Satan stalk athwart the plain;
He hastes along the burning soil of Hell.
‘Welcome, ye despots, to my dark domain,
With maddening joy mine anguished senses swell
To welcome to their home the friends I love so well.’

…

Hark! to those notes, how sweet, how thrilling sweet
They echo to the sound of angels’ feet.

…

Oh haste to the bower where roses are spread,
For there is prepared thy nuptial bed.
Oh haste — hark! hark! — they’re gone.

…

CHORUS OF SPIRITS:
Stay, ye days of contentment and joy,
Whilst love every care is erasing,
Stay ye pleasures that never can cloy,
And ye spirits that can never cease pleasing.

And if any soft passion be near,
Which mortals, frail mortals, can know,
Let love shed on the bosom a tear,
And dissolve the chill ice-drop of woe.

SYMPHONY.

FRANCIS:
‘Soft, my dearest angel, stay,
Oh! you suck my soul away;
Suck on, suck on, I glow, I glow!
Tides of maddening passion roll,
And streams of rapture drown my soul.
Now give me one more billing kiss,
Let your lips now repeat the bliss,
Endless kisses steal my breath,
No life can equal such a death.’

CHARLOTTE:
‘Oh! yes I will kiss thine eyes so fair,
And I will clasp thy form;
Serene is the breath of the balmy air,
But I think, love, thou feelest me warm
And I will recline on thy marble neck
Till I mingle into thee;
And I will kiss the rose on thy cheek,
And thou shalt give kisses to me.
For here is no morn to flout our delight,
Oh! dost thou not joy at this?
And here we may lie an endless night,
A long, long night of bliss.’

Spirits! when raptures move,
Say what it is to love,
When passion’s tear stands on the cheek,
When bursts the unconscious sigh;
And the tremulous lips dare not speak
What is told by the soul-felt eye.
But what is sweeter to revenge’s ear
Than the fell tyrant’s last expiring yell?
Yes! than love’s sweetest blisses ‘tis more dear

To drink the floatings of a despot’s knell.
I wake—’tis done—’tis over.

DESPAIR.

And canst thou mock mine agony, thus calm
In cloudless radiance, Queen of silver night?
Can you, ye flow'rets, spread your perfumed balm
Mid pearly gems of dew that shine so bright?
And you wild winds, thus can you sleep so still
Whilst throbs the tempest of my breast so high?
Can the fierce night-fiends rest on yonder hill,
And, in the eternal mansions of the sky,
Can the directors of the storm in powerless silence lie?

Hark! I hear music on the zephyr's wing,
Louder it floats along the unruffled sky;
Some fairy sure has touched the viewless string —
Now faint in distant air the murmurs die.
Awhile it stills the tide of agony.
Now — now it loftier swells — again stern woe
Arises with the awakening melody.
Again fierce torments, such as demons know,
In bitterer, feller tide, on this torn bosom flow.

Arise ye sightless spirits of the storm,
Ye unseen minstrels of the aereal song,
Pour the fierce tide around this lonely form,
And roll the tempest's wildest swell along.
Dart the red lightning, wing the forked flash,
Pour from thy cloud-formed hills the thunder's roar;
Arouse the whirlwind — and let ocean dash
In fiercest tumult on the rocking shore, —
Destroy this life or let earth's fabric be no more.

Yes! every tie that links me here is dead;
Mysterious Fate, thy mandate I obey,
Since hope and peace, and joy, for aye are fled,
I come, terrific power, I come away.
Then o'er this ruined soul let spirits of Hell,

In triumph, laughing wildly, mock its pain;
And though with direst pangs mine heart-strings swell,
I'll echo back their deadly yells again,
Cursing the power that ne'er made aught in vain.

FRAGMENT.

Yes! all is past — swift time has fled away,
Yet its swell pauses on my sickening mind;
How long will horror nerve this frame of clay?
I'm dead, and lingers yet my soul behind.
Oh! powerful Fate, revoke thy deadly spell,
And yet that may not ever, ever be,
Heaven will not smile upon the work of Hell;
Ah! no, for Heaven cannot smile on me;
Fate, envious Fate, has sealed my wayward destiny.

I sought the cold brink of the midnight surge,
I sighed beneath its wave to hide my woes,
The rising tempest sung a funeral dirge,
And on the blast a frightful yell arose.
Wild flew the meteors o'er the maddened main,
Wilder did grief athwart my bosom glare;
Stilled was the unearthly howling, and a strain,
Swelled mid the tumult of the battling air,
'Twas like a spirit's song, but yet more soft and fair.

I met a maniac — like he was to me,
I said—'Poor victim, wherefore dost thou roam?
And canst thou not contend with agony,
That thus at midnight thou dost quit thine home?'
'Ah there she sleeps: cold is her bloodless form,
And I will go to slumber in her grave;
And then our ghosts, whilst raves the maddened storm,
Will sweep at midnight o'er the wildered wave;
Wilt thou our lowly beds with tears of pity lave?'

'Ah! no, I cannot shed the pitying tear,
This breast is cold, this heart can feel no more —
But I can rest me on thy chilling bier,
Can shriek in horror to the tempest's roar.'

THE SPECTRAL HORSEMAN.

What was the shriek that struck Fancy's ear
As it sate on the ruins of time that is past?
Hark! it floats on the fitful blast of the wind,
And breathes to the pale moon a funeral sigh.
It is the Benshie's moan on the storm,
Or a shivering fiend that thirsting for sin,
Seeks murder and guilt when virtue sleeps,
Winged with the power of some ruthless king,
And sweeps o'er the breast of the prostrate plain.
It was not a fiend from the regions of Hell
That poured its low moan on the stillness of night:
It was not a ghost of the guilty dead,
Nor a yelling vampire reeking with gore;
But aye at the close of seven years' end,
That voice is mixed with the swell of the storm,
And aye at the close of seven years' end,
A shapeless shadow that sleeps on the hill
Awakens and floats on the mist of the heath.
It is not the shade of a murdered man,
Who has rushed uncalled to the throne of his God,
And howls in the pause of the eddying storm.
This voice is low, cold, hollow, and chill,
'Tis not heard by the ear, but is felt in the soul.
'Tis more frightful far than the death-daemon's scream,
Or the laughter of fiends when they howl o'er the corpse
Of a man who has sold his soul to Hell.
It tells the approach of a mystic form,
A white courser bears the shadowy sprite;
More thin they are than the mists of the mountain,
When the clear moonlight sleeps on the waveless lake.
More pale HIS cheek than the snows of Nithona,
When winter rides on the northern blast,
And howls in the midst of the leafless wood.
Yet when the fierce swell of the tempest is raving,

And the whirlwinds howl in the caves of Inisfallen,
Still secure mid the wildest war of the sky,
The phantom courser scours the waste,
And his rider howls in the thunder's roar.
O'er him the fierce bolts of avenging Heaven
Pause, as in fear, to strike his head.
The meteors of midnight recoil from his figure,
Yet the 'wildered peasant, that oft passes by,
With wonder beholds the blue flash through his form:
And his voice, though faint as the sighs of the dead,
The startled passenger shudders to hear,
More distinct than the thunder's wildest roar.
Then does the dragon, who, chained in the caverns
To eternity, curses the champion of Erin,
Moan and yell loud at the lone hour of midnight,
And twine his vast wreaths round the forms of the daemons;
Then in agony roll his death-swimming eyeballs,
Though 'wildered by death, yet never to die!
Then he shakes from his skeleton folds the nightmares,
Who, shrieking in agony, seek the couch
Of some fevered wretch who courts sleep in vain;
Then the tombless ghosts of the guilty dead
In horror pause on the fitful gale.
They float on the swell of the eddying tempest,
And scared seek the caves of gigantic…
Where their thin forms pour unearthly sounds
On the blast that sweets the breast of the lake,
And mingles its swell with the moonlight air.

MELODY TO A SCENE OF FORMER TIMES.

Art thou indeed forever gone,
Forever, ever, lost to me?
Must this poor bosom beat alone,
Or beat at all, if not for thee?
Ah! why was love to mortals given,
To lift them to the height of Heaven,
Or dash them to the depths of Hell?
Yet I do not reproach thee, dear!
Ah, no! the agonies that swell
This panting breast, this frenzied brain,
Might wake my—'s slumb'ring tear.
Oh! Heaven is witness I did love,
And Heaven does know I love thee still,
Does know the fruitless sick'ning thrill,
When reason's judgement vainly strove
To blot thee from my memory;
But which might never, never be.
Oh! I appeal to that blest day
When passion's wildest ecstasy
Was coldness to the joys I knew,
When every sorrow sunk away.
Oh! I had never lived before,
But now those blisses are no more.
And now I cease to live again,
I do not blame thee, love; ah, no!
The breast that feels this anguished woe.
Throbs for thy happiness alone.
Two years of speechless bliss are gone,
I thank thee, dearest, for the dream.
'Tis night — what faint and distant scream
Comes on the wild and fitful blast?
It moans for pleasures that are past,
It moans for days that are gone by.
Oh! lagging hours, how slow you fly!

I see a dark and lengthened vale,
The black view closes with the tomb;
But darker is the lowering gloom
That shades the intervening dale.
In visioned slumber for awhile
I seem again to share thy smile,
I seem to hang upon thy tone.
Again you say, ‘Confide in me,
For I am thine, and thine alone,
And thine must ever, ever be.’
But oh! awak’ning still anew,
Athwart my enanguished senses flew
A fiercer, deadlier agony!

POEMS FROM ST. IRVYNE; OR, THE ROSICRUCIAN.

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VICTORIA.

(Another version of "The Triumph of Conscience" immediately preceding.)

1.
'Twas dead of the night, when I sat in my dwelling;
One glimmering lamp was expiring and low;
Around, the dark tide of the tempest was swelling,
Along the wild mountains night-ravens were yelling, —
They bodingly presaged destruction and woe.

2.
'Twas then that I started! — the wild storm was howling,
Nought was seen, save the lightning, which danced in the sky;
Above me, the crash of the thunder was rolling,
And low, chilling murmurs, the blast wafted by.

3.
My heart sank within me — unheeded the war
Of the battling clouds, on the mountain-tops, broke; —
Unheeded the thunder-peal crashed in mine ear —
This heart, hard as iron, is stranger to fear;
But conscience in low, noiseless whispering spoke.

4.
'Twas then that her form on the whirlwind upholding,
The ghost of the murdered Victoria strode;
In her right hand, a shadowy shroud she was holding,
She swiftly advanced to my lonesome abode.

5. I wildly then called on the tempest to bear me—'

…

ON THE DARK HEIGHT OF JURA.

1.
Ghosts of the dead! have I not heard your yelling
Rise on the night-rolling breath of the blast,
When o'er the dark aether the tempest is swelling,
And on eddying whirlwind the thunder-peal passed?

2.
For oft have I stood on the dark height of Jura,
Which frowns on the valley that opens beneath;
Oft have I braved the chill night-tempest's fury,
Whilst around me, I thought, echoed murmurs of death.

3.
And now, whilst the winds of the mountain are howling,
O father! thy voice seems to strike on mine ear;
In air whilst the tide of the night-storm is rolling,
It breaks on the pause of the elements' jar.

4.
On the wing of the whirlwind which roars o'er the mountain
Perhaps rides the ghost of my sire who is dead:
On the mist of the tempest which hangs o'er the fountain,
Whilst a wreath of dark vapour encircles his head.

SISTER ROSA: A BALLAD.

1.
The death-bell beats! —
The mountain repeats
The echoing sound of the knell;
And the dark Monk now
Wraps the cowl round his brow,
As he sits in his lonely cell.

2.
And the cold hand of death
Chills his shuddering breath,
As he lists to the fearful lay
Which the ghosts of the sky,
As they sweep wildly by,
Sing to departed day.
And they sing of the hour
When the stern fates had power
To resolve Rosa's form to its clay.

3.
But that hour is past;
And that hour was the last
Of peace to the dark Monk's brain.
Bitter tears, from his eyes, gushed silent and fast;
And he strove to suppress them in vain.

4.
Then his fair cross of gold he dashed on the floor,
When the death-knell struck on his ear. —
'Delight is in store
For her evermore;
But for me is fate, horror, and fear.'

5.
Then his eyes wildly rolled,

When the death-bell tolled,
And he raged in terrific woe.
And he stamped on the ground, —
But when ceased the sound,
Tears again began to flow.

6.
And the ice of despair
Chilled the wild throb of care,
And he sate in mute agony still;
Till the night-stars shone through the cloudless air,
And the pale moonbeam slept on the hill.

7.
Then he knelt in his cell: —
And the horrors of hell
Were delights to his agonized pain,
And he prayed to God to dissolve the spell,
Which else must for ever remain.

8.
And in fervent pray'r he knelt on the ground,
Till the abbey bell struck One:
His feverish blood ran chill at the sound:
A voice hollow and horrible murmured around —
'The term of thy penance is done!'

9.
Grew dark the night;
The moonbeam bright
Waxed faint on the mountain high;
And, from the black hill,
Went a voice cold and still, —
'Monk! thou art free to die.'

10.
Then he rose on his feet,
And his heart loud did beat,

And his limbs they were palsied with dread;
Whilst the grave's clammy dew
O'er his pale forehead grew;
And he shuddered to sleep with the dead.

11.
And the wild midnight storm
Raved around his tall form,
As he sought the chapel's gloom:
And the sunk grass did sigh
To the wind, bleak and high,
As he searched for the new-made tomb.

12.
And forms, dark and high,
Seemed around him to fly,
And mingle their yells with the blast:
And on the dark wall
Half-seen shadows did fall,
As enhorrored he onward passed.

13.
And the storm-fiends wild rave
O'er the new-made grave,
And dread shadows linger around.
The Monk called on God his soul to save,
And, in horror, sank on the ground.

14.
Then despair nerved his arm
To dispel the charm,
And he burst Rosa's coffin asunder.
And the fierce storm did swell
More terrific and fell,
And louder pealed the thunder.

15.
And laughed, in joy, the fiendish throng,

Mixed with ghosts of the mouldering dead:
And their grisly wings, as they floated along,
Whistled in murmurs dread.

16.
And her skeleton form the dead Nun reared
Which dripped with the chill dew of hell.
In her half-eaten eyeballs two pale flames appeared,
And triumphant their gleam on the dark Monk glared,
As he stood within the cell.

17.
And her lank hand lay on his shuddering brain;
But each power was nerved by fear. —
'I never, henceforth, may breathe again;
Death now ends mine anguished pain. —
The grave yawns, — we meet there.'

18.
And her skeleton lungs did utter the sound,
So deadly, so lone, and so fell,
That in long vibrations shuddered the ground;
And as the stern notes floated around,
A deep groan was answered from hell.

ST. IRVYNE'S TOWER.

1.
How swiftly through Heaven's wide expanse
Bright day's resplendent colours fade!
How sweetly does the moonbeam's glance
With silver tint St. Irvyne's glade!

2.
No cloud along the spangled air,
Is borne upon the evening breeze;
How solemn is the scene! how fair
The moonbeams rest upon the trees!

3.
Yon dark gray turret glimmers white,
Upon it sits the mournful owl;
Along the stillness of the night,
Her melancholy shriekings roll.

4.
But not alone on Irvyne's tower,
The silver moonbeam pours her ray;
It gleams upon the ivied bower,
It dances in the cascade's spray.

5.
'Ah! why do dark'ning shades conceal
The hour, when man must cease to be?
Why may not human minds unveil
The dim mists of futurity? —

6.
'The keenness of the world hath torn
The heart which opens to its blast;
Despised, neglected, and forlorn,
Sinks the wretch in death at last.'

BEREAVEMENT.

1.
How stern are the woes of the desolate mourner,
As he bends in still grief o'er the hallowed bier,
As enanguished he turns from the laugh of the scorner,
And drops, to Perfection's remembrance, a tear;
When floods of despair down his pale cheek are streaming,
When no blissful hope on his bosom is beaming,
Or, if lulled for awhile, soon he starts from his dreaming,
And finds torn the soft ties to affection so dear.

2.
Ah! when shall day dawn on the night of the grave,
Or summer succeed to the winter of death?
Rest awhile, hapless victim, and Heaven will save
The spirit, that faded away with the breath.
Eternity points in its amaranth bower,
Where no clouds of fate o'er the sweet prospect lower,
Unspeakable pleasure, of goodness the dower,
When woe fades away like the mist of the heath.

THE DROWNED LOVER.

1.
Ah! faint are her limbs, and her footstep is weary,
Yet far must the desolate wanderer roam;
Though the tempest is stern, and the mountain is dreary,
She must quit at deep midnight her pitiless home.
I see her swift foot dash the dew from the whortle,
As she rapidly hastes to the green grove of myrtle;
And I hear, as she wraps round her figure the kirtle,
'Stay thy boat on the lake, — dearest Henry, I come.'

2.
High swelled in her bosom the throb of affection,
As lightly her form bounded over the lea,
And arose in her mind every dear recollection;
'I come, dearest Henry, and wait but for thee.'
How sad, when dear hope every sorrow is soothing,
When sympathy's swell the soft bosom is moving,
And the mind the mild joys of affection is proving,
Is the stern voice of fate that bids happiness flee!

3.
Oh! dark lowered the clouds on that horrible eve,
And the moon dimly gleamed through the tempested air;
Oh! how could fond visions such softness deceive?
Oh! how could false hope rend, a bosom so fair?
Thy love's pallid corse the wild surges are laving,
O'er his form the fierce swell of the tempest is raving;
But, fear not, parting spirit; thy goodness is saving,
In eternity's bowers, a seat for thee there.

6. — The Drowned Lover: Song. 1811; The Lake-Storm, Rossetti, 1870.

STANZA FROM A TRANSLATION OF THE MARSEILLAISE HYMN.

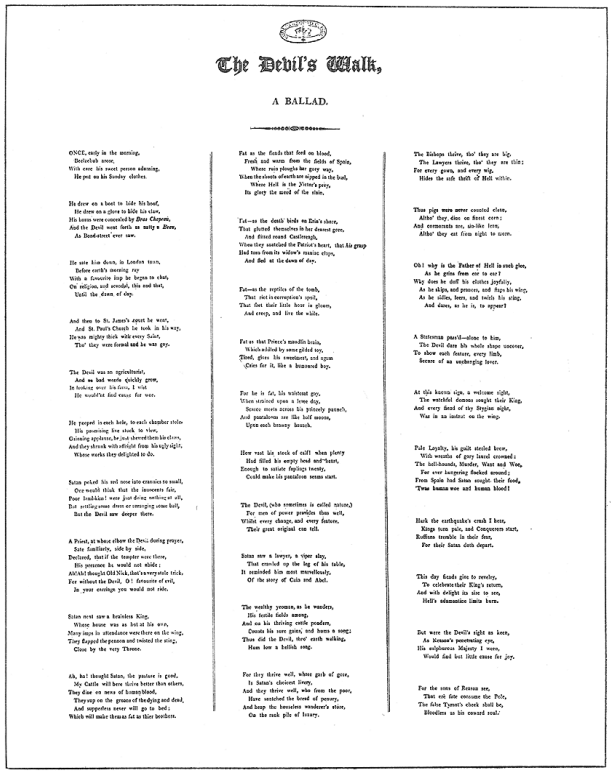
(Published by Forman, "Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1876; dated 1810.)

Tremble, Kings despised of man!
Ye traitors to your Country,
Tremble! Your parricidal plan
At length shall meet its destiny…
We all are soldiers fit to fight,
But if we sink in glory's night
Our mother Earth will give ye new
The brilliant pathway to pursue
Which leads to Death or Victory…

THE DEVIL'S WALK: A BALLAD

Shelley's first major poetical work was published as a broadside in 1812, consisting of seven irregular ballad stanzas of 49 lines. *The Devil's Walk* is a satirical attack and criticism of the British government. The poem was modelled on *The Devil's Thoughts* (1799) by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey.

In 1812 Shelley wished to protest against the actions of the British government and the harsh economic conditions in the country at the time. This poem appeared shortly after the food riots in Devon, where Shelley was living. Prices for grain were at their highest level in 1812, with severe shortages of food and prices being heavily inflated. In the work, Shelley attacks "a brainless King", the "princely paunch" and "each brawny haunch" of the Prince Regent. The members of both houses of Parliament and the Church are also blamed with scorn.



The Devil's Walk,

A BALLAD.

ONCE, early in the morning,
Beelzebub arose,
With care his sweet person adorning,
He put on his Sunday clothes.

He drew on a boot to hide his hoof,
He drew on a glove to hide his claw,
His horns were concealed by *Bear Clapcott*,
And the Devil went forth an ugly *Bore*,
As Broad-street ever saw.

He ate his dish, in London town,
Before earth's morning ray
With a favourite imp he began to chat,
On religion, and scandal, this and that,
Until the dawn of day.

And then to St. James's apart he went,
And St. Paul's Church he took in his way,
He was mighty thick with every Saint,
Tho' they were found and he was gay.

The Devil was an agriculturist,
And as bad weeds quickly grow,
It looking over his farm, I wist
He would'nt find cause for woe.

He popped in each hole, in each chamber stole
His promising live stock to view,
Growing opulent, he just shovelled them his-there,
And they shrunk with affright from his ugly sight,
Whose works they delighted to do.

Satan peeped his red nose into counties to smell,
One would think that the innocents fair,
Poor Insulaus! were just doing nothing at all,
But settling some down or emerging some half,
But the Devil saw deeper there.

A Priest, at whose elbow the Devil during prayer,
Sate familiarly, side by side,
Declared, that if the trapper were there,
His presence he would not abide;
Ah! Ah! thought Old Nick, that's a very sly trick,
For without the Devil, O! favourite of evil,
In your meetings you would not ride.

Satan next saw a homeless King,
Whose house was as hot as his way,
Many imps in attendance were there on the wing,
They flapped the pennon and twisted the sling,
Close by the very Throne.

Ah, ha! thought Satan, the pasture is good,
My Cattle will here thrive better than others,
They rise on news of bonny blood,
They sup on the groans of the dying and dead,
And supperless never will go to bed;
Which will make threats fat as thire brothers.

Fat as the fiends that feed on blood,
Frank and warm from the fields of Spain,
Where men ploughs her gory way,
When the streets of earth are wiped in the bud,
Whose Hell is the Divine's prey,
Its glory the need of the state.

Fat—as the death birds on Erin's shore,
That plotted themselves in her dearest gore,
And fitted meet Castlereagh,
When they sanctified the Patriot's heart, that his grasp
Had torn from its widow's mantic clasp,
And fled at the dawn of day.

Fat—as the reptiles of the tomb,
That riot in corruption's spoil,
That feet their little hour in gloom,
And creep, and live the while.

Fat as that Prince's swaddle babe,
Which nibbled by some gifted spy,
Fiend, gives his sweetmeat, and upon
Cries for it, like a humoured boy.

For he is fat, his waistcoat gay,
When strained upon a lone day,
Bursts more across his princely paunch,
And pantaloons are like half seasons,
Upon each brassy haunch.

Here rest his stock of stuff when glory
Had filled his empty head and heart,
Enough to satiate fagings twenty,
Could make his pantaloon seams start.

The Devil, (who sometimes is called nature,)
For men of power provides thus well,
Whilst every change, and every feature,
Their great original can tell.

Satan saw a lawyer, a viper shy,
That crawled up the leg of his table,
It reminded him most marvellously,
Of the story of Cain and Abel.

The wealthy yeoman, as he wanders,
His fertile fields among,
And on his thriving cattle ponders,
Counts his sure gains, and hums a song;
Thus did the Devil, thro' earth walking,
Hum low a hellish song.

For they thrive well, whose gain of gore,
Is Satan's choicest luxury,
And they thrive well, who from the poor,
Have snatched the bread of penury,
And heap the homeless wanderer's store,
On the rank pile of luxury.

The Bishops theive, tho' they are lily,
The Lawyers theive, tho' they are virile:
For every groan, and every sigh,
Hides the soft theft of Hell within.

Thus pigs were never counted clean,
Altho' they chew on finest corn:
And sermonists are, sin-like here,
Altho' they eat from sight to scorn.

Oh! why is the Father of Hell in such glee,
As he grins from ear to ear?
Why does he doff his clothes joyfully,
As he skips, and prances, and flogs his wife,
As he rifles, hurt, and twists his sting,
And dares, as he is, to appear?

A Statesman pearl—alone to him,
The Devil dare his whole shape uncover,
To show each feature, every limb,
Secure of an undivided lover.

At this known sign, a welcome sight,
The wrinkled demons sought their King,
And every fiend of thy Stygian night,
Was in an instant on the wing.

Pale Loyalty, his guilt steeled brow,
With wreaths of grey laurel crowned;
The hell-hounds, Murder, War and Woe,
For ever hungering fawned around;
From Spain had Satan sought their food,
Twas human woe and human blood!

Hark the earthquake's crash I hear,
Kings turn pale, and Conquerors start,
Ruffians tremble in their fear,
For their hours dark depart.

This day fiends give to revelry,
To celebrate their King's return,
And with delight in sin to see,
Hell's adamantine limits burn.

But were the Devil's sight as keen,
As Reason's penetrating eye,
His sulphurous Majesty I ween,
Would find but little cause for joy.

For the sons of Reason see,
That evil fate encounter the Pole,
The false Tyrant's shock shall be,
Bloodless as his coward soul.

How the poem first appeared in print

THE DEVIL'S WALK.

A BALLAD.

(Published as a broadside by Shelley, 1812.)

1.
Once, early in the morning, Beelzebub arose,
With care his sweet person adorning,
He put on his Sunday clothes.

2.
He drew on a boot to hide his hoof,
He drew on a glove to hide his claw,
His horns were concealed by a Bras Chapeau,
And the Devil went forth as natty a Beau
As Bond-street ever saw.

3.
He sate him down, in London town,
Before earth's morning ray;
With a favourite imp he began to chat,
On religion, and scandal, this and that,
Until the dawn of day.

4.
And then to St. James's Court he went,
And St. Paul's Church he took on his way;
He was mighty thick with every Saint,
Though they were formal and he was gay.

5.
The Devil was an agriculturist,
And as bad weeds quickly grow,
In looking over his farm, I wist,
He wouldn't find cause for woe.

6.
He peeped in each hole, to each chamber stole,
His promising live-stock to view;
Grinning applause, he just showed them his claws,
And they shrunk with affright from his ugly sight,
Whose work they delighted to do.

7.
Satan poked his red nose into crannies so small
One would think that the innocents fair,
Poor lambkins! were just doing nothing at all
But settling some dress or arranging some ball,
But the Devil saw deeper there.

8.
A Priest, at whose elbow the Devil during prayer
Sate familiarly, side by side,
Declared that, if the Tempter were there,
His presence he would not abide.
Ah! ah! thought Old Nick, that's a very stale trick,
For without the Devil, O favourite of Evil,
In your carriage you would not ride.

9.
Satan next saw a brainless King,
Whose house was as hot as his own;
Many Imps in attendance were there on the wing,
They flapped the pennon and twisted the sting,
Close by the very Throne.

10.
Ah! ah! thought Satan, the pasture is good,
My Cattle will here thrive better than others;
They dine on news of human blood,
They sup on the groans of the dying and dead,
And supperless never will go to bed;
Which will make them fat as their brothers.

11.
Fat as the Fiends that feed on blood,
Fresh and warm from the fields of Spain,
Where Ruin ploughs her gory way,
Where the shoots of earth are nipped in the bud,
Where Hell is the Victor's prey,
Its glory the meed of the slain.

12.
Fat — as the Death-birds on Erin's shore,
That glutted themselves in her dearest gore,
And flitted round Castlereagh,
When they snatched the Patriot's heart, that HIS grasp
Had torn from its widow's maniac clasp,
— And fled at the dawn of day.

13.
Fat — as the Reptiles of the tomb,
That riot in corruption's spoil,
That fret their little hour in gloom,
And creep, and live the while.

14.
Fat as that Prince's maudlin brain,
Which, addled by some gilded toy,
Tired, gives his sweetmeat, and again
Cries for it, like a humoured boy.

15.
For he is fat, — his waistcoat gay,
When strained upon a levee day,
Scarce meets across his princely paunch;
And pantaloons are like half-moons
Upon each brawny haunch.

16.
How vast his stock of calf! when plenty
Had filled his empty head and heart,

Enough to satiate foplings twenty,
Could make his pantaloon seams start.

17.
The Devil (who sometimes is called Nature),
For men of power provides thus well,
Whilst every change and every feature,
Their great original can tell.

18.
Satan saw a lawyer a viper slay,
That crawled up the leg of his table,
It reminded him most marvellously
Of the story of Cain and Abel.

19.
The wealthy yeoman, as he wanders
His fertile fields among,
And on his thriving cattle ponders,
Counts his sure gains, and hums a song;
Thus did the Devil, through earth walking,
Hum low a hellish song.

20.
For they thrive well whose garb of gore
Is Satan's choicest livery,
And they thrive well who from the poor
Have snatched the bread of penury,
And heap the houseless wanderer's store
On the rank pile of luxury.

21.
The Bishops thrive, though they are big;
The Lawyers thrive, though they are thin;
For every gown, and every wig,
Hides the safe thrift of Hell within.

22.
Thus pigs were never counted clean,
Although they dine on finest corn;
And cormorants are sin-like lean,
Although they eat from night to morn.

23.
Oh! why is the Father of Hell in such glee,
As he grins from ear to ear?
Why does he doff his clothes joyfully,
As he skips, and prances, and flaps his wing,
As he sidles, leers, and twirls his sting,
And dares, as he is, to appear?

24.
A statesman passed — alone to him,
The Devil dare his whole shape uncover,
To show each feature, every limb,
Secure of an unchanging lover.

25.
At this known sign, a welcome sight,
The watchful demons sought their King,
And every Fiend of the Stygian night,
Was in an instant on the wing.

26.
Pale Loyalty, his guilt-steeled brow,
With wreaths of gory laurel crowned:
The hell-hounds, Murder, Want and Woe,
Forever hungering, flocked around;
From Spain had Satan sought their food,
‘Twas human woe and human blood!

27.
Hark! the earthquake’s crash I hear, —
Kings turn pale, and Conquerors start,

Ruffians tremble in their fear,
For their Satan doth depart.

28.
This day Fiends give to revelry
To celebrate their King's return,
And with delight its Sire to see
Hell's adamantine limits burn.

29.
But were the Devil's sight as keen
As Reason's penetrating eye,
His sulphurous Majesty I ween,
Would find but little cause for joy.

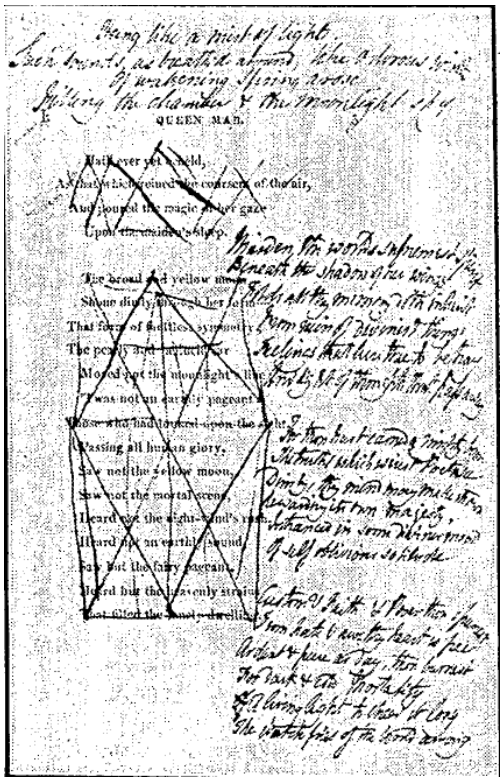
30.
For the sons of Reason see
That, ere fate consume the Pole,
The false Tyrant's cheek shall be
Bloodless as his coward soul.

QUEEN MAB

A PHILOSOPHICAL POEM WITH NOTES

Originally published in 1813, this long poem is formed of nine cantos and complemented with seventeen notes. After substantial revision, a second edition of a portion of the text was published in 1816 under the title *The Daemon of the World*. This poem serves as a foundation of the poet's theory of revolution, depicting a two-pronged revolt involving necessary changes, brought on by both nature and the virtue of mankind.

Shelley used William Godwin's idea of "necessity" and combined it with his own idea of ever-changing nature, to establish the theory that contemporary evils inflicting society would break up over time. The poem is written in the form of a fairy tale that presents a future vision of a utopia on earth. Queen Mab, a fairy famously referred to by Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet*, descends in a chariot to a dwelling where Ianthe is sleeping on a couch. Queen Mab detaches Ianthe's spirit or soul from her sleeping body and transports it on a celestial tour to her palace at the edge of the universe.



A page of the poem's original manuscript

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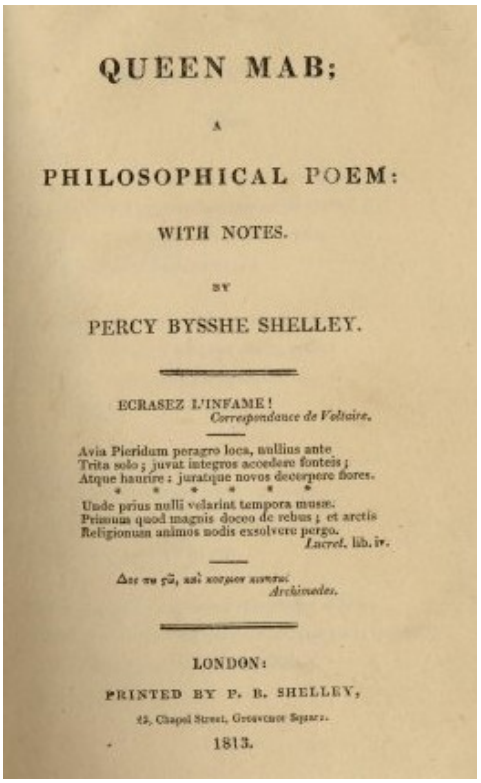

QUEEN MAB;

A

PHILOSOPHICAL POEM:

WITH NOTES.

BY

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

ECRASEZ L'INFAME!
Correspondance de Voltaire.

Avia Pieridum peragro loca, nullius ante
Trita solo; juvat integros accedere fonteis;
Atque haurire: juvatque novos decerpere flores.
* * * * * *
Unde prius nulli velarint tempora musæ.
Primum quod magnis doceo de rebus; et arctis
Religionum animos nodis exsolvere pergo.
Lucret. lib. iv.

Δος που στῶ, καὶ κοσμον κινησω.
Archimedes.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY P. B. SHELLEY,
23, Chapel Street, Grosvenor Square.
1813.

The original title page

QUEEN MAB.

A PHILOSOPHICAL POEM, WITH NOTES.

(An edition (250 copies) of "Queen Mab" was printed at London in the summer of 1813 by Shelley himself, whose name, as author and printer, appears on the title-page (see "Bibliographical List"). Of this edition about seventy copies were privately distributed. Sections 1, 2, 8, and 9 were afterwards rehandled, and the intermediate sections here and there revised and altered; and of this new text sections 1 and 2 were published by Shelley in the "Alastor" volume of 1816, under the title, "The Daemon of the World". The remainder lay unpublished till 1876, when sections 8 and 9 were printed by Mr. H. Buxton Forman, C.B., from a printed copy of "Queen Mab" with Shelley's manuscript corrections. See "The Shelley Library", pages 36-44, for a description of this copy, which is in Mr. Forman's possession. Sources of the text are (1) the editio princeps of 1813; (2) text (with some omissions) in the "Poetical Works" of 1839, edited by Mrs. Shelley; (3) text (one line only wanting) in the 2nd edition of the "Poetical Works", 1839 (same editor).

"Queen Mab" was probably written during the year 1812 — it is first heard of at Lynmouth, August 18, 1812 ("Shelley Memorials", page 39) — but the text may be assumed to include earlier material.)

ECRASEZ L'INFAME! — Correspondance de Voltaire.

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Religionum animos nodis exsolvere pergo. — Lucret. lib. 4.

Dos pon sto, kai kosmon kineso. — Archimedes.

TO HARRIET *****.

Whose is the love that gleaming through the world,
Wards off the poisonous arrow of its scorn?
Whose is the warm and partial praise,
Virtue's most sweet reward?

Beneath whose looks did my reviving soul
Riper in truth and virtuous daring grow?
Whose eyes have I gazed fondly on,
And loved mankind the more?

HARRIET! on thine: — thou wert my purer mind;
Thou wert the inspiration of my song;
Thine are these early wilding flowers,
Though garlanded by me.

Then press into thy breast this pledge of love;
And know, though time may change and years may roll,
Each floweret gathered in my heart
It consecrates to thine.

QUEEN MAB.

1.

How wonderful is Death,
Death and his brother Sleep!
One, pale as yonder waning moon
With lips of lurid blue;
The other, rosy as the morn
When throned on ocean's wave
It blushes o'er the world:
Yet both so passing wonderful!

Hath then the gloomy Power
Whose reign is in the tainted sepulchres
Seized on her sinless soul?
Must then that peerless form
Which love and admiration cannot view
Without a beating heart, those azure veins
Which steal like streams along a field of snow,
That lovely outline, which is fair
As breathing marble, perish?
Must putrefaction's breath
Leave nothing of this heavenly sight
But loathsomeness and ruin?
Spare nothing but a gloomy theme,
On which the lightest heart might moralize?
Or is it only a sweet slumber
Stealing o'er sensation,
Which the breath of roseate morning
Chaseth into darkness?
Will Ianthe wake again,
And give that faithful bosom joy
Whose sleepless spirit waits to catch
Light, life and rapture from her smile?

Yes! she will wake again,
Although her glowing limbs are motionless,
And silent those sweet lips,
Once breathing eloquence,
That might have soothed a tiger's rage,
Or thawed the cold heart of a conqueror.
Her dewy eyes are closed,
And on their lids, whose texture fine
Scarce hides the dark blue orbs beneath,
The baby Sleep is pillowed:
Her golden tresses shade
The bosom's stainless pride,
Curling like tendrils of the parasite
Around a marble column.

Hark! whence that rushing sound?
'Tis like the wondrous strain
That round a lonely ruin swells,
Which, wandering on the echoing shore,
The enthusiast hears at evening:
'Tis softer than the west wind's sigh;
'Tis wilder than the unmeasured notes
Of that strange lyre whose strings
The genii of the breezes sweep:
Those lines of rainbow light
Are like the moonbeams when they fall
Through some cathedral window, but the tints
Are such as may not find
Comparison on earth.

Behold the chariot of the Fairy Queen!
Celestial coursers paw the unyielding air;
Their filmy pennons at her word they furl,
And stop obedient to the reins of light:
These the Queen of Spells drew in,
She spread a charm around the spot,
And leaning graceful from the aethereal car,

Long did she gaze, and silently,
Upon the slumbering maid.

Oh! not the visioned poet in his dreams,
When silvery clouds float through the ‘wildered brain,
When every sight of lovely, wild and grand
Astonishes, enraptures, elevates,
When fancy at a glance combines
The wondrous and the beautiful, —
So bright, so fair, so wild a shape
Hath ever yet beheld,
As that which reined the coursers of the air,
And poured the magic of her gaze
Upon the maiden’s sleep.

The broad and yellow moon
Shone dimly through her form —
That form of faultless symmetry;
The pearly and pellucid car
Moved not the moonlight’s line:
‘Twas not an earthly pageant:
Those who had looked upon the sight,
Passing all human glory,
Saw not the yellow moon,
Saw not the mortal scene,
Heard not the night-wind’s rush,
Heard not an earthly sound,
Saw but the fairy pageant,
Heard but the heavenly strains
That filled the lonely dwelling.

The Fairy’s frame was slight, yon fibrous cloud,
That catches but the palest tinge of even,
And which the straining eye can hardly seize
When melting into eastern twilight’s shadow,
Were scarce so thin, so slight; but the fair star
That gems the glittering coronet of morn,

Sheds not a light so mild, so powerful,
As that which, bursting from the Fairy's form,
Spread a purpureal halo round the scene,
Yet with an undulating motion,
Swayed to her outline gracefully.

From her celestial car
The Fairy Queen descended,
And thrice she waved her wand
Circled with wreaths of amaranth:
Her thin and misty form
Moved with the moving air,
And the clear silver tones,
As thus she spoke, were such
As are unheard by all but gifted ear.

FAIRY:
'Stars! your balmiest influence shed!
Elements! your wrath suspend!
Sleep, Ocean, in the rocky bounds
That circle thy domain!
Let not a breath be seen to stir
Around yon grass-grown ruin's height,
Let even the restless gossamer
Sleep on the moveless air!
Soul of Ianthe! thou,
Judged alone worthy of the envied boon,
That waits the good and the sincere; that waits
Those who have struggled, and with resolute will
Vanquished earth's pride and meanness, burst the chains,
The icy chains of custom, and have shone
The day-stars of their age; — Soul of Ianthe!
Awake! arise!'

Sudden arose
Ianthe's Soul; it stood
All beautiful in naked purity,

The perfect semblance of its bodily frame.
Instinct with inexpressible beauty and grace,
Each stain of earthliness
Had passed away, it reassumed
Its native dignity, and stood
Immortal amid ruin.

Upon the couch the body lay
Wrapped in the depth of slumber:
Its features were fixed and meaningless,
Yet animal life was there,
And every organ yet performed
Its natural functions: 'twas a sight
Of wonder to behold the body and soul.
The self-same lineaments, the same
Marks of identity were there:
Yet, oh, how different! One aspires to Heaven,
Pants for its sempiternal heritage,
And ever-changing, ever-rising still,
Wantons in endless being.
The other, for a time the unwilling sport
Of circumstance and passion, struggles on;
Fleets through its sad duration rapidly:
Then, like an useless and worn-out machine,
Rots, perishes, and passes.

FAIRY:
'Spirit! who hast dived so deep;
Spirit! who hast soared so high;
Thou the fearless, thou the mild,
Accept the boon thy worth hath earned,
Ascend the car with me.'

SPIRIT:
'Do I dream? Is this new feeling
But a visioned ghost of slumber?
If indeed I am a soul,

A free, a disembodied soul,
Speak again to me.’

FAIRY:
‘I am the Fairy MAB: to me ‘tis given
The wonders of the human world to keep:
The secrets of the immeasurable past,
In the unfailing consciences of men,
Those stern, unflattering chroniclers, I find:
The future, from the causes which arise
In each event, I gather: not the sting
Which retributive memory implants
In the hard bosom of the selfish man;
Nor that ecstatic and exulting throb
Which virtue’s votary feels when he sums up
The thoughts and actions of a well-spent day,
Are unforeseen, unregistered by me:
And it is yet permitted me, to rend
The veil of mortal frailty, that the spirit,
Clothed in its changeless purity, may know
How soonest to accomplish the great end
For which it hath its being, and may taste
That peace, which in the end all life will share.
This is the meed of virtue; happy Soul,
Ascend the car with me!’

The chains of earth’s immurement
Fell from Ianthe’s spirit;
They shrank and brake like bandages of straw
Beneath a wakened giant’s strength.
She knew her glorious change,
And felt in apprehension uncontrolled
New raptures opening round:
Each day-dream of her mortal life,
Each frenzied vision of the slumbers
That closed each well-spent day,
Seemed now to meet reality.

The Fairy and the Soul proceeded;
The silver clouds disparted;
And as the car of magic they ascended,
Again the speechless music swelled,
Again the coursers of the air
Unfurled their azure pennons, and the Queen
Shaking the beamy reins
Bade them pursue their way.

The magic car moved on.
The night was fair, and countless stars
Studded Heaven's dark blue vault, —
Just o'er the eastern wave
Peeped the first faint smile of morn: —
The magic car moved on —
From the celestial hoofs
The atmosphere in flaming sparkles flew,
And where the burning wheels
Eddied above the mountain's loftiest peak,
Was traced a line of lightning.
Now it flew far above a rock,
The utmost verge of earth,
The rival of the Andes, whose dark brow
Lowered o'er the silver sea.

Far, far below the chariot's path,
Calm as a slumbering babe,
Tremendous Ocean lay.
The mirror of its stillness showed
The pale and waning stars,
The chariot's fiery track,
And the gray light of morn
Tinging those fleecy clouds
That canopied the dawn.
Seemed it, that the chariot's way
Lay through the midst of an immense concave,
Radiant with million constellations, tinged

With shades of infinite colour,
And semicircled with a belt
Flashing incessant meteors.

The magic car moved on.
As they approached their goal
The coursers seemed to gather speed;
The sea no longer was distinguished; earth
Appeared a vast and shadowy sphere;
The sun's unclouded orb
Rolled through the black concave;
Its rays of rapid light
Parted around the chariot's swifter course,
And fell, like ocean's feathery spray
Dashed from the boiling surge
Before a vessel's prow.

The magic car moved on.
Earth's distant orb appeared
The smallest light that twinkles in the heaven;
Whilst round the chariot's way
Innumerable systems rolled,
And countless spheres diffused
An ever-varying glory.
It was a sight of wonder: some
Were horned like the crescent moon;
Some shed a mild and silver beam
Like Hesperus o'er the western sea;
Some dashed athwart with trains of flame,
Like worlds to death and ruin driven;
Some shone like suns, and, as the chariot passed,
Eclipsed all other light.

Spirit of Nature! here!
In this interminable wilderness
Of worlds, at whose immensity
Even soaring fancy staggers,

Here is thy fitting temple.
Yet not the lightest leaf
That quivers to the passing breeze
Is less instinct with thee:
Yet not the meanest worm
That lurks in graves and fattens on the dead
Less shares thy eternal breath.
Spirit of Nature! thou!
Imperishable as this scene,
Here is thy fitting temple.

2.

If solitude hath ever led thy steps
To the wild Ocean's echoing shore,
And thou hast lingered there,
Until the sun's broad orb
Seemed resting on the burnished wave,
Thou must have marked the lines
Of purple gold, that motionless
Hung o'er the sinking sphere:
Thou must have marked the billowy clouds
Edged with intolerable radiancy
Towering like rocks of jet
Crowned with a diamond wreath.
And yet there is a moment,
When the sun's highest point
Peeps like a star o'er Ocean's western edge,
When those far clouds of feathery gold,
Shaded with deepest purple, gleam
Like islands on a dark blue sea;
Then has thy fancy soared above the earth,
And furled its wearied wing
Within the Fairy's fane.

Yet not the golden islands
Gleaming in yon flood of light,

Nor the feathery curtains
Stretching o'er the sun's bright couch,
Nor the burnished Ocean waves
Paving that gorgeous dome,
So fair, so wonderful a sight
As Mab's aethereal palace could afford.
Yet likest evening's vault, that faery Hall!
As Heaven, low resting on the wave,it spread
Its floors of flashing light,
Its vast and azure dome,
Its fertile golden islands
Floating on a silver sea;
Whilst suns their mingling beamings darted
Through clouds of circumambient darkness,
And pearly battlements around
Looked o'er the immense of Heaven.

The magic car no longer moved.
The Fairy and the Spirit
Entered the Hall of Spells:
Those golden clouds
That rolled in glittering billows
Beneath the azure canopy
With the aethereal footsteps trembled not:
The light and crimson mists,
Floating to strains of thrilling melody
Through that unearthly dwelling,
Yielded to every movement of the will.
Upon their passive swell the Spirit leaned,
And, for the varied bliss that pressed around,
Used not the glorious privilege
Of virtue and of wisdom.

'Spirit!' the Fairy said,
And pointed to the gorgeous dome,
'This is a wondrous sight
And mocks all human grandeur;

But, were it virtue's only meed, to dwell
In a celestial palace, all resigned
To pleasurable impulses, immured
Within the prison of itself, the will
Of changeless Nature would be unfulfilled.
Learn to make others happy. Spirit, come!
This is thine high reward: — the past shall rise;
Thou shalt behold the present; I will teach
The secrets of the future.'

The Fairy and the Spirit
Approached the overhanging battlement. —
Below lay stretched the universe!
There, far as the remotest line
That bounds imagination's flight,
Countless and unending orbs
In mazy motion intermingled,
Yet still fulfilled immutably
Eternal Nature's law.
Above, below, around,
The circling systems formed
A wilderness of harmony;
Each with undeviating aim,
In eloquent silence, through the depths of space
Pursued its wondrous way.

There was a little light
That twinkled in the misty distance:
None but a spirit's eye
Might ken that rolling orb;
None but a spirit's eye,
And in no other place
But that celestial dwelling, might behold
Each action of this earth's inhabitants.
But matter, space and time
In those aereal mansions cease to act;
And all-prevailing wisdom, when it reaps

The harvest of its excellence, o'er-bounds
Those obstacles, of which an earthly soul
Fears to attempt the conquest.

The Fairy pointed to the earth.
The Spirit's intellectual eye
Its kindred beings recognized.
The thronging thousands, to a passing view,
Seemed like an ant-hill's citizens.
How wonderful! that even
The passions, prejudices, interests,
That sway the meanest being, the weak touch
That moves the finest nerve,
And in one human brain
Causes the faintest thought, becomes a link
In the great chain of Nature.

'Behold,' the Fairy cried,
'Palmyra's ruined palaces! —
Behold! where grandeur frowned;
Behold! where pleasure smiled;
What now remains? — the memory
Of senselessness and shame —
What is immortal there?
Nothing — it stands to tell
A melancholy tale, to give
An awful warning: soon
Oblivion will steal silently
The remnant of its fame.
Monarchs and conquerors there
Proud o'er prostrate millions trod —
The earthquakes of the human race;
Like them, forgotten when the ruin
That marks their shock is past.

'Beside the eternal Nile,
The Pyramids have risen.

Nile shall pursue his changeless way:
Those Pyramids shall fall;
Yea! not a stone shall stand to tell
The spot whereon they stood!
Their very site shall be forgotten,
As is their builder's name!

'Behold yon sterile spot;
Where now the wandering Arab's tent
Flaps in the desert-blast.
There once old Salem's haughty fane
Reared high to Heaven its thousand golden domes,
And in the blushing face of day
Exposed its shameful glory.
Oh! many a widow, many an orphan cursed
The building of that fane; and many a father;
Worn out with toil and slavery, implored
The poor man's God to sweep it from the earth,
And spare his children the detested task
Of piling stone on stone, and poisoning
The choicest days of life,
To soothe a dotard's vanity.
There an inhuman and uncultured race
Howled hideous praises to their Demon-God;
They rushed to war, tore from the mother's womb
The unborn child, — old age and infancy
Promiscuous perished; their victorious arms
Left not a soul to breathe. Oh! they were fiends:
But what was he who taught them that the God
Of nature and benevolence hath given
A special sanction to the trade of blood?
His name and theirs are fading, and the tales
Of this barbarian nation, which imposture
Recites till terror credits, are pursuing
Itself into forgetfulness.

‘Where Athens, Rome, and Sparta stood,
There is a moral desert now:
The mean and miserable huts,
The yet more wretched palaces,
Contrasted with those ancient fanes,
Now crumbling to oblivion;
The long and lonely colonnades,
Through which the ghost of Freedom stalks,
Seem like a well-known tune,
Which in some dear scene we have loved to hear,
Remembered now in sadness.
But, oh! how much more changed,
How gloomier is the contrast
Of human nature there!
Where Socrates expired, a tyrant’s slave,
A coward and a fool, spreads death around —
Then, shuddering, meets his own.
Where Cicero and Antoninus lived,
A cowled and hypocritical monk
Prays, curses and deceives.

‘Spirit, ten thousand years
Have scarcely passed away,
Since, in the waste where now the savage drinks
His enemy’s blood, and aping Europe’s sons,
Wakes the unholy song of war, Arose a stately city,
Metropolis of the western continent:
There, now, the mossy column-stone,
Indented by Time’s unrelaxing grasp,
Which once appeared to brave
All, save its country’s ruin;
There the wide forest scene,
Rude in the uncultivated loveliness
Of gardens long run wild,
Seems, to the unwilling sojourner, whose steps
Chance in that desert has delayed,
Thus to have stood since earth was what it is.

Yet once it was the busiest haunt,
Whither, as to a common centre, flocked
Strangers, and ships, and merchandise:
Once peace and freedom blessed
The cultivated plain:
But wealth, that curse of man,
Blighted the bud of its prosperity:
Virtue and wisdom, truth and liberty,
Fled, to return not, until man shall know
That they alone can give the bliss
Worthy a soul that claims
Its kindred with eternity.

'There's not one atom of yon earth
But once was living man;
Nor the minutest drop of rain,
That hangeth in its thinnest cloud,
But flowed in human veins:
And from the burning plains
Where Libyan monsters yell,
From the most gloomy glens
Of Greenland's sunless clime,
To where the golden fields
Of fertile England spread
Their harvest to the day,
Thou canst not find one spot
Whereon no city stood.

'How strange is human pride!
I tell thee that those living things,
To whom the fragile blade of grass,
That springeth in the morn
And perisheth ere noon,
Is an unbounded world;
I tell thee that those viewless beings,
Whose mansion is the smallest particle
Of the impassive atmosphere,

Think, feel and live like man;
That their affections and antipathies,
Like his, produce the laws
Ruling their moral state;
And the minutest throb
That through their frame diffuses
The slightest, faintest motion,
Is fixed and indispensable
As the majestic laws
That rule yon rolling orbs.'

The Fairy paused. The Spirit,
In ecstasy of admiration, felt
All knowledge of the past revived; the events
Of old and wondrous times,
Which dim tradition interruptedly
Teaches the credulous vulgar, were unfolded
In just perspective to the view;
Yet dim from their infinitude.
The Spirit seemed to stand
High on an isolated pinnacle;
The flood of ages combating below,
The depth of the unbounded universe
Above, and all around
Nature's unchanging harmony.

3.

'Fairy!' the Spirit said,
And on the Queen of Spells
Fixed her aethereal eyes,
'I thank thee. Thou hast given
A boon which I will not resign, and taught
A lesson not to be unlearned. I know
The past, and thence I will essay to glean
A warning for the future, so that man
May profit by his errors, and derive

Experience from his folly:
For, when the power of imparting joy
Is equal to the will, the human soul
Requires no other Heaven.'

MAB:
'Turn thee, surpassing Spirit!
Much yet remains unscanned.
Thou knowest how great is man,
Thou knowest his imbecility:
Yet learn thou what he is:
Yet learn the lofty destiny
Which restless time prepares
For every living soul.

'Behold a gorgeous palace, that, amid
Yon populous city rears its thousand towers
And seems itself a city. Gloomy troops
Of sentinels, in stern and silent ranks,
Encompass it around: the dweller there
Cannot be free and happy; hearest thou not
The curses of the fatherless, the groans
Of those who have no friend? He passes on:
The King, the wearer of a gilded chain
That binds his soul to abjectness, the fool
Whom courtiers nickname monarch, whilst a slave
Even to the basest appetites — that man
Heeds not the shriek of penury; he smiles
At the deep curses which the destitute
Mutter in secret, and a sullen joy
Pervades his bloodless heart when thousands groan
But for those morsels which his wantonness
Wastes in unjoyous revelry, to save
All that they love from famine: when he hears
The tale of horror, to some ready-made face
Of hypocritical assent he turns,
Smothering the glow of shame, that, spite of him,

Flushes his bloated cheek.
Now to the meal
Of silence, grandeur, and excess, he drags
His palled unwilling appetite. If gold,
Gleaming around, and numerous viands culled
From every clime, could force the loathing sense
To overcome satiety, — if wealth
The spring it draws from poisons not, — or vice,
Unfeeling, stubborn vice, converteth not
Its food to deadliest venom; then that king
Is happy; and the peasant who fulfils
His unforced task, when he returns at even,
And by the blazing faggot meets again
Her welcome for whom all his toil is sped,
Tastes not a sweeter meal.
Behold him now
Stretched on the gorgeous couch; his fevered brain
Reels dizzily awhile: but ah! too soon
The slumber of intemperance subsides,
And conscience, that undying serpent, calls
Her venomous brood to their nocturnal task.
Listen! he speaks! oh! mark that frenzied eye —
Oh! mark that deadly visage.'

KING:
'No cessation!
Oh! must this last for ever? Awful Death,
I wish, yet fear to clasp thee! — Not one moment
Of dreamless sleep! O dear and blessed peace!
Why dost thou shroud thy vestal purity
In penury and dungeons? wherefore lurkest
With danger, death, and solitude; yet shunn'st
The palace I have built thee? Sacred peace!
Oh visit me but once, but pitying shed
One drop of balm upon my withered soul.'

THE FAIRY:
‘Vain man! that palace is the virtuous heart,
And Peace defileth not her snowy robes
In such a shed as thine. Hark! yet he mutters;
His slumbers are but varied agonies,
They prey like scorpions on the springs of life.
There needeth not the hell that bigots frame
To punish those who err: earth in itself
Contains at once the evil and the cure;
And all-sufficing Nature can chastise
Those who transgress her law, — she only knows
How justly to proportion to the fault
The punishment it merits.
Is it strange
That this poor wretch should pride him in his woe?
Take pleasure in his abjectness, and hug
The scorpion that consumes him? Is it strange
That, placed on a conspicuous throne of thorns,
Grasping an iron sceptre, and immured
Within a splendid prison, whose stern bounds
Shut him from all that’s good or dear on earth,
His soul asserts not its humanity?
That man’s mild nature rises not in war
Against a king’s employ? No—’tis not strange.
He, like the vulgar, thinks, feels, acts and lives
Just as his father did; the unconquered powers
Of precedent and custom interpose
Between a KING and virtue. Stranger yet,
To those who know not Nature, nor deduce
The future from the present, it may seem,
That not one slave, who suffers from the crimes
Of this unnatural being; not one wretch,
Whose children famish, and whose nuptial bed
Is earth’s unpitying bosom, rears an arm
To dash him from his throne!
Those gilded flies
That, basking in the sunshine of a court,

Fatten on its corruption! — what are they?
— The drones of the community; they feed
On the mechanic's labour: the starved hind
For them compels the stubborn glebe to yield
Its unshared harvests; and yon squalid form,
Leaner than fleshless misery, that wastes
A sunless life in the unwholesome mine,
Drags out in labour a protracted death,
To glut their grandeur; many faint with toil,
That few may know the cares and woe of sloth.

'Whence, think'st thou, kings and parasites arose?
Whence that unnatural line of drones, who heap
Toil and unvanquishable penury
On those who build their palaces, and bring
Their daily bread? — From vice, black loathsome vice;
From rapine, madness, treachery, and wrong;
From all that 'genders misery, and makes
Of earth this thorny wilderness; from lust,
Revenge, and murder…And when Reason's voice,
Loud as the voice of Nature, shall have waked
The nations; and mankind perceive that vice
Is discord, war, and misery; that virtue
Is peace, and happiness and harmony;
When man's maturer nature shall disdain
The playthings of its childhood; — kingly glare
Will lose its power to dazzle; its authority
Will silently pass by; the gorgeous throne
Shall stand unnoticed in the regal hall,
Fast falling to decay; whilst falsehood's trade
Shall be as hateful and unprofitable
As that of truth is now.
Where is the fame
Which the vainglorious mighty of the earth
Seek to eternize? Oh! the faintest sound
From Time's light footfall, the minutest wave
That swells the flood of ages, whelms in nothing

The unsubstantial bubble. Ay! today
Stern is the tyrant's mandate, red the gaze
That flashes desolation, strong the arm
That scatters multitudes. To-morrow comes!
That mandate is a thunder-peal that died
In ages past; that gaze, a transient flash
On which the midnight closed, and on that arm
The worm has made his meal.
The virtuous man,
Who, great in his humility, as kings
Are little in their grandeur; he who leads
Invincibly a life of resolute good,
And stands amid the silent dungeon depths
More free and fearless than the trembling judge,
Who, clothed in venal power, vainly strove
To bind the impassive spirit; — when he falls,
His mild eye beams benevolence no more:
Withered the hand outstretched but to relieve;
Sunk Reason's simple eloquence, that rolled
But to appal the guilty. Yes! the grave
Hath quenched that eye, and Death's relentless frost
Withered that arm: but the unfading fame
Which Virtue hangs upon its votary's tomb;
The deathless memory of that man, whom kings
Call to their mind and tremble; the remembrance
With which the happy spirit contemplates
Its well-spent pilgrimage on earth,
Shall never pass away.

'Nature rejects the monarch, not the man;
The subject, not the citizen: for kings
And subjects, mutual foes, forever play
A losing game into each other's hands,
Whose stakes are vice and misery. The man
Of virtuous soul commands not, nor obeys.
Power, like a desolating pestilence,
Pollutes whate'er it touches; and obedience,

Bane of all genius, virtue, freedom, truth,
Makes slaves of men, and, of the human frame,
A mechanized automaton.
When Nero,
High over flaming Rome, with savage joy
Lowered like a fiend, drank with enraptured ear
The shrieks of agonizing death, beheld
The frightful desolation spread, and felt
A new-created sense within his soul
Thrill to the sight, and vibrate to the sound;
Think'st thou his grandeur had not overcome
The force of human kindness? and, when Rome,
With one stern blow, hurled not the tyrant down,
Crushed not the arm red with her dearest blood
Had not submissive abjectness destroyed
Nature's suggestions?
Look on yonder earth:
The golden harvests spring; the unfailing sun
Sheds light and life; the fruits, the flowers, the trees,
Arise in due succession; all things speak
Peace, harmony, and love. The universe,
In Nature's silent eloquence, declares
That all fulfil the works of love and joy, —
All but the outcast, Man. He fabricates
The sword which stabs his peace; he cherisheth
The snakes that gnaw his heart; he raiseth up
The tyrant, whose delight is in his woe,
Whose sport is in his agony. Yon sun,
Lights it the great alone? Yon silver beams,
Sleep they less sweetly on the cottage thatch
Than on the dome of kings? Is mother Earth
A step-dame to her numerous sons, who earn
Her unshared gifts with unremitting toil;
A mother only to those puling babes
Who, nursed in ease and luxury, make men
The playthings of their babyhood, and mar,

In self-important childishness, that peace
Which men alone appreciate?

‘Spirit of Nature! no.
The pure diffusion of thy essence throbs
Alike in every human heart.
Thou, aye, erectest there
Thy throne of power unappealable:
Thou art the judge beneath whose nod
Man’s brief and frail authority
Is powerless as the wind
That passeth idly by.
Thine the tribunal which surpasseth
The show of human justice,
As God surpasses man.

‘Spirit of Nature! thou
Life of interminable multitudes;
Soul of those mighty spheres
Whose changeless paths through
Heaven’s deep silence lie;
Soul of that smallest being,
The dwelling of whose life
Is one faint April sun-gleam; —
Man, like these passive things,
Thy will unconsciously fulfilleth:
Like theirs, his age of endless peace,
Which time is fast maturing,
Will swiftly, surely come;
And the unbounded frame, which thou pervadest,
Will be without a flaw
Marring its perfect symmetry.

4.

‘How beautiful this night! the balmiest sigh,
Which vernal zephyrs breathe in evening’s ear,
Were discord to the speaking quietude

That wraps this moveless scene. Heaven's ebon vault,
Studded with stars unutterably bright,
Through which the moon's unclouded grandeur rolls,
Seems like a canopy which love had spread
To curtain her sleeping world. Yon gentle hills,
Robed in a garment of untrodden snow;
Yon darksome rocks, whence icicles depend,
So stainless, that their white and glittering spires
Tinge not the moon's pure beam; yon castled steep,
Whose banner hangeth o'er the time-worn tower
So idly, that rapt fancy deemeth it
A metaphor of peace; — all form a scene
Where musing Solitude might love to lift
Her soul above this sphere of earthliness;
Where Silence undisturbed might watch alone,
So cold, so bright, so still.
The orb of day,
In southern climes, o'er ocean's waveless field
Sinks sweetly smiling: not the faintest breath
Steals o'er the unruffled deep; the clouds of eve
Reflect unmoved the lingering beam of day;
And vesper's image on the western main
Is beautifully still. To-morrow comes:
Cloud upon cloud, in dark and deepening mass,
Roll o'er the blackened waters; the deep roar
Of distant thunder mutters awfully;
Tempest unfolds its pinion o'er the gloom
That shrouds the boiling surge; the pitiless fiend,
With all his winds and lightnings, tracks his prey;
The torn deep yawns, — the vessel finds a grave
Beneath its jagged gulf.
Ah! whence yon glare
That fires the arch of Heaven! — that dark red smoke
Blotting the silver moon? The stars are quenched
In darkness, and the pure and spangling snow
Gleams faintly through the gloom that gathers round!
Hark to that roar, whose swift and deaf'ning peals

In countless echoes through the mountains ring,
Startling pale Midnight on her starry throne!
Now swells the intermingling din; the jar
Frequent and frightful of the bursting bomb;
The falling beam, the shriek, the groan, the shout,
The ceaseless clangour, and the rush of men
Inebriate with rage: — loud, and more loud
The discord grows; till pale Death shuts the scene,
And o'er the conqueror and the conquered draws
His cold and bloody shroud. — Of all the men
Whom day's departing beam saw blooming there,
In proud and vigorous health; of all the hearts
That beat with anxious life at sunset there;
How few survive, how few are beating now!
All is deep silence, like the fearful calm
That slumbers in the storm's portentous pause;
Save when the frantic wail of widowed love
Comes shuddering on the blast, or the faint moan
With which some soul bursts from the frame of clay
Wrapped round its struggling powers.
The gray morn
Dawns on the mournful scene; the sulphurous smoke
Before the icy wind slow rolls away,
And the bright beams of frosty morning dance
Along the spangling snow. There tracks of blood
Even to the forest's depth, and scattered arms,
And lifeless warriors, whose hard lineaments
Death's self could change not, mark the dreadful path
Of the outsallying victors: far behind,
Black ashes note where their proud city stood.
Within yon forest is a gloomy glen —
Each tree which guards its darkness from the day,
Waves o'er a warrior's tomb.
I see thee shrink,
Surpassing Spirit! — wert thou human else?
I see a shade of doubt and horror fleet
Across thy stainless features: yet fear not;

This is no unconnected misery,
Nor stands uncaused, and irretrievable.
Man's evil nature, that apology
Which kings who rule, and cowards who crouch, set up
For their unnumbered crimes, sheds not the blood
Which desolates the discord-wasted land.
From kings, and priests, and statesmen, war arose,
Whose safety is man's deep unbettered woe,
Whose grandeur his debasement. Let the axe
Strike at the root, the poison-tree will fall;
And where its venomed exhalations spread
Ruin, and death, and woe, where millions lay
Quenching the serpent's famine, and their bones
Bleaching unburied in the putrid blast,
A garden shall arise, in loveliness
Surpassing fabled Eden.
Hath Nature's soul,
That formed this world so beautiful, that spread
Earth's lap with plenty, and life's smallest chord
Strung to unchanging unison, that gave
The happy birds their dwelling in the grove,
That yielded to the wanderers of the deep
The lovely silence of the unfathomed main,
And filled the meanest worm that crawls in dust
With spirit, thought, and love; on Man alone,
Partial in causeless malice, wantonly
Heaped ruin, vice, and slavery; his soul
Blasted with withering curses; placed afar
The meteor-happiness, that shuns his grasp,
But serving on the frightful gulf to glare,
Rent wide beneath his footsteps?
Nature! — no!
Kings, priests, and statesmen, blast the human flower
Even in its tender bud; their influence darts
Like subtle poison through the bloodless veins
Of desolate society. The child,
Ere he can lisp his mother's sacred name,

Swells with the unnatural pride of crime, and lifts
His baby-sword even in a hero's mood.
This infant-arm becomes the bloodiest scourge
Of devastated earth; whilst specious names,
Learned in soft childhood's unsuspecting hour,
Serve as the sophisms with which manhood dims
Bright Reason's ray, and sanctifies the sword
Upraised to shed a brother's innocent blood.
Let priest-led slaves cease to proclaim that man
Inherits vice and misery, when Force
And Falsehood hang even o'er the cradled babe
Stifling with rudest grasp all natural good.
'Ah! to the stranger-soul, when first it peeps
From its new tenement, and looks abroad
For happiness and sympathy, how stern
And desolate a tract is this wide world!
How withered all the buds of natural good!
No shade, no shelter from the sweeping storms
Of pitiless power! On its wretched frame,
Poisoned, perchance, by the disease and woe
Heaped on the wretched parent whence it sprung
By morals, law, and custom, the pure winds
Of Heaven, that renovate the insect tribes,
May breathe not. The untainting light of day
May visit not its longings. It is bound
Ere it has life: yea, all the chains are forged
Long ere its being: all liberty and love
And peace is torn from its defencelessness;
Cursed from its birth, even from its cradle doomed
To abjectness and bondage!

'Throughout this varied and eternal world
Soul is the only element: the block
That for uncounted ages has remained
The moveless pillar of a mountain's weight
Is active, living spirit. Every grain
Is sentient both in unity and part,

And the minutest atom comprehends
A world of loves and hatreds; these beget
Evil and good: hence truth and falsehood spring;
Hence will and thought and action, all the germs
Of pain or pleasure, sympathy or hate,
That variegate the eternal universe.
Soul is not more polluted than the beams
Of Heaven's pure orb, ere round their rapid lines
The taint of earth-born atmospheres arise.

'Man is of soul and body, formed for deeds
Of high resolve, on fancy's boldest wing
To soar unwearied, fearlessly to turn
The keenest pangs to peacefulness, and taste
The joys which mingled sense and spirit yield.
Or he is formed for abjectness and woe,
To grovel on the dunghill of his fears,
To shrink at every sound, to quench the flame
Of natural love in sensualism, to know
That hour as blessed when on his worthless days
The frozen hand of Death shall set its seal,
Yet fear the cure, though hating the disease.
The one is man that shall hereafter be;
The other, man as vice has made him now.

'War is the statesman's game, the priest's delight,
The lawyer's jest, the hired assassin's trade,
And, to those royal murderers, whose mean thrones
Are bought by crimes of treachery and gore,
The bread they eat, the staff on which they lean.
Guards, garbed in blood-red livery, surround
Their palaces, participate the crimes
That force defends, and from a nation's rage
Secure the crown, which all the curses reach
That famine, frenzy, woe and penury breathe.
These are the hired bravos who defend
The tyrant's throne — the bullies of his fear:

These are the sinks and channels of worst vice,
The refuse of society, the dregs
Of all that is most vile: their cold hearts blend
Deceit with sternness, ignorance with pride,
All that is mean and villanous, with rage
Which hopelessness of good, and self-contempt,
Alone might kindle; they are decked in wealth,
Honour and power, then are sent abroad
To do their work. The pestilence that stalks
In gloomy triumph through some eastern land
Is less destroying. They cajole with gold,
And promises of fame, the thoughtless youth
Already crushed with servitude: he knows
His wretchedness too late, and cherishes
Repentance for his ruin, when his doom
Is sealed in gold and blood!
Those too the tyrant serve, who, skilled to snare
The feet of Justice in the toils of law,
Stand, ready to oppress the weaker still;
And right or wrong will vindicate for gold,
Sneering at public virtue, which beneath
Their pitiless tread lies torn and trampled, where
Honour sits smiling at the sale of truth.

‘Then grave and hoary-headed hypocrites,
Without a hope, a passion, or a love,
Who, through a life of luxury and lies,
Have crept by flattery to the seats of power,
Support the system whence their honours flow…
They have three words: — well tyrants know their use,
Well pay them for the loan, with usury
Torn from a bleeding world! — God, Hell, and Heaven.
A vengeful, pitiless, and almighty fiend,
Whose mercy is a nickname for the rage
Of tameless tigers hungering for blood.
Hell, a red gulf of everlasting fire,
Where poisonous and undying worms prolong

Eternal misery to those hapless slaves
Whose life has been a penance for its crimes.
And Heaven, a meed for those who dare belie
Their human nature, quake, believe, and cringe
Before the mockeries of earthly power.

'These tools the tyrant tempers to his work,
Wields in his wrath, and as he wills destroys,
Omnipotent in wickedness: the while
Youth springs, age moulders, manhood tamely does
His bidding, bribed by short-lived joys to lend
Force to the weakness of his trembling arm.

'They rise, they fall; one generation comes
Yielding its harvest to destruction's scythe.
It fades, another blossoms: yet behold!
Red glows the tyrant's stamp-mark on its bloom,
Withering and cankering deep its passive prime.
He has invented lying words and modes,
Empty and vain as his own coreless heart;
Evasive meanings, nothings of much sound,
To lure the heedless victim to the toils
Spread round the valley of its paradise.

'Look to thyself, priest, conqueror, or prince!
Whether thy trade is falsehood, and thy lusts
Deep wallow in the earnings of the poor,
With whom thy Master was: — or thou delight'st
In numbering o'er the myriads of thy slain,
All misery weighing nothing in the scale
Against thy short-lived fame: or thou dost load
With cowardice and crime the groaning land,
A pomp-fed king. Look to thy wretched self!
Ay, art thou not the veriest slave that e'er
Crawled on the loathing earth? Are not thy days
Days of unsatisfying listlessness?
Dost thou not cry, ere night's long rack is o'er,

“When will the morning come?” Is not thy youth
A vain and feverish dream of sensualism?
Thy manhood blighted with unripe disease?
Are not thy views of unregretted death
Drear, comfortless, and horrible? Thy mind,
Is it not morbid as thy nerveless frame,
Incapable of judgement, hope, or love?
And dost thou wish the errors to survive
That bar thee from all sympathies of good,
After the miserable interest
Thou hold’st in their protraction? When the grave
Has swallowed up thy memory and thyself,
Dost thou desire the bane that poisons earth
To twine its roots around thy coffined clay,
Spring from thy bones, and blossom on thy tomb,
That of its fruit thy babes may eat and die?

5.

‘Thus do the generations of the earth
Go to the grave, and issue from the womb,
Surviving still the imperishable change
That renovates the world; even as the leaves
Which the keen frost-wind of the waning year
Has scattered on the forest soil, and heaped
For many seasons there — though long they choke,
Loading with loathsome rottenness the land,
All germs of promise, yet when the tall trees
From which they fell, shorn of their lovely shapes,
Lie level with the earth to moulder there,
They fertilize the land they long deformed,
Till from the breathing lawn a forest springs
Of youth, integrity, and loveliness,
Like that which gave it life, to spring and die.
Thus suicidal selfishness, that blights
The fairest feelings of the opening heart,
Is destined to decay, whilst from the soil

Shall spring all virtue, all delight, all love,
And judgement cease to wage unnatural war
With passion's unsubduable array.
Twin-sister of religion, selfishness!
Rival in crime and falsehood, aping all
The wanton horrors of her bloody play;
Yet frozen, unimpassioned, spiritless,
Shunning the light, and owning not its name,
Compelled, by its deformity, to screen,
With flimsy veil of justice and of right,
Its unattractive lineaments, that scare
All, save the brood of ignorance: at once
The cause and the effect of tyranny;
Unblushing, hardened, sensual, and vile;
Dead to all love but of its abjectness,
With heart impassive by more noble powers
Than unshared pleasure, sordid gain, or fame;
Despising its own miserable being,
Which still it longs, yet fears to disenthrall.

'Hence commerce springs, the venal interchange
Of all that human art or nature yield;
Which wealth should purchase not, but want demand,
And natural kindness hasten to supply
From the full fountain of its boundless love,
For ever stifled, drained, and tainted now.
Commerce! beneath whose poison-breathing shade
No solitary virtue dares to spring,
But Poverty and Wealth with equal hand
Scatter their withering curses, and unfold
The doors of premature and violent death,
To pining famine and full-fed disease,
To all that shares the lot of human life,
Which poisoned, body and soul, scarce drags the chain,
That lengthens as it goes and clanks behind.

‘Commerce has set the mark of selfishness,
The signet of its all-enslaving power
Upon a shining ore, and called it gold:
Before whose image bow the vulgar great,
The vainly rich, the miserable proud,
The mob of peasants, nobles, priests, and kings,
And with blind feelings reverence the power
That grinds them to the dust of misery.
But in the temple of their hireling hearts
Gold is a living god, and rules in scorn
All earthly things but virtue.

‘Since tyrants, by the sale of human life,
Heap luxuries to their sensualism, and fame
To their wide-wasting and insatiate pride,
Success has sanctioned to a credulous world
The ruin, the disgrace, the woe of war.
His hosts of blind and unresisting dupes
The despot numbers; from his cabinet
These puppets of his schemes he moves at will,
Even as the slaves by force or famine driven,
Beneath a vulgar master, to perform
A task of cold and brutal drudgery; —
Hardened to hope, insensible to fear,
Scarce living pulleys of a dead machine,
Mere wheels of work and articles of trade,
That grace the proud and noisy pomp of wealth!

‘The harmony and happiness of man
Yields to the wealth of nations; that which lifts
His nature to the heaven of its pride,
Is bartered for the poison of his soul;
The weight that drags to earth his towering hopes,
Blighting all prospect but of selfish gain,
Withering all passion but of slavish fear,
Extinguishing all free and generous love
Of enterprise and daring, even the pulse

That fancy kindles in the beating heart
To mingle with sensation, it destroys, —
Leaves nothing but the sordid lust of self,
The grovelling hope of interest and gold,
Unqualified, unmingled, unredeemed
Even by hypocrisy.
And statesmen boast
Of wealth! The wordy eloquence, that lives
After the ruin of their hearts, can gild
The bitter poison of a nation's woe,
Can turn the worship of the servile mob
To their corrupt and glaring idol, Fame,
From Virtue, trampled by its iron tread,
Although its dazzling pedestal be raised
Amid the horrors of a limb-strewn field,
With desolated dwellings smoking round.
The man of ease, who, by his warm fireside,
To deeds of charitable intercourse,
And bare fulfilment of the common laws
Of decency and prejudice, confines
The struggling nature of his human heart,
Is duped by their cold sophistry; he sheds
A passing tear perchance upon the wreck
Of earthly peace, when near his dwelling's door
The frightful waves are driven, — when his son
Is murdered by the tyrant, or religion
Drives his wife raving mad. But the poor man,
Whose life is misery, and fear, and care;
Whom the morn wakens but to fruitless toil;
Who ever hears his famished offspring's scream,
Whom their pale mother's uncomplaining gaze
For ever meets, and the proud rich man's eye
Flashing command, and the heart-breaking scene
Of thousands like himself; — he little heeds
The rhetoric of tyranny; his hate
Is quenchless as his wrongs; he laughs to scorn
The vain and bitter mockery of words,

Feeling the horror of the tyrant's deeds,
And unrestrained but by the arm of power,
That knows and dreads his enmity.

'The iron rod of Penury still compels
Her wretched slave to bow the knee to wealth,
And poison, with unprofitable toil,
A life too void of solace to confirm
The very chains that bind him to his doom.
Nature, impartial in munificence,
Has gifted man with all-subduing will.
Matter, with all its transitory shapes,
Lies subjected and plastic at his feet,
That, weak from bondage, tremble as they tread.
How many a rustic Milton has passed by,
Stifling the speechless longings of his heart,
In unremitting drudgery and care!
How many a vulgar Cato has compelled
His energies, no longer tameless then,
To mould a pin, or fabricate a nail!
How many a Newton, to whose passive ken
Those mighty spheres that gem infinity
Were only specks of tinsel, fixed in Heaven
To light the midnights of his native town!

'Yet every heart contains perfection's germ:
The wisest of the sages of the earth,
That ever from the stores of reason drew
Science and truth, and virtue's dreadless tone,
Were but a weak and inexperienced boy,
Proud, sensual, unimpassioned, unimbued
With pure desire and universal love,
Compared to that high being, of cloudless brain,
Untainted passion, elevated will,
Which Death (who even would linger long in awe
Within his noble presence, and beneath
His changeless eyebeam) might alone subdue.

Him, every slave now dragging through the filth
Of some corrupted city his sad life,
Pining with famine, swoln with luxury,
Blunting the keenness of his spiritual sense
With narrow schemings and unworthy cares,
Or madly rushing through all violent crime,
To move the deep stagnation of his soul, —
Might imitate and equal.
But mean lust
Has bound its chains so tight around the earth,
That all within it but the virtuous man
Is venal: gold or fame will surely reach
The price prefixed by selfishness, to all
But him of resolute and unchanging will;
Whom, nor the plaudits of a servile crowd,
Nor the vile joys of tainting luxury,
Can bribe to yield his elevated soul
To Tyranny or Falsehood, though they wield
With blood-red hand the sceptre of the world.

'All things are sold: the very light of Heaven
Is venal; earth's unsparing gifts of love,
The smallest and most despicable things
That lurk in the abysses of the deep,
All objects of our life, even life itself,
And the poor pittance which the laws allow
Of liberty, the fellowship of man,
Those duties which his heart of human love
Should urge him to perform instinctively,
Are bought and sold as in a public mart
Of undisguising selfishness, that sets
On each its price, the stamp-mark of her reign.
Even love is sold; the solace of all woe
Is turned to deadliest agony, old age
Shivers in selfish beauty's loathing arms,
And youth's corrupted impulses prepare
A life of horror from the blighting bane

Of commerce; whilst the pestilence that springs
From unenjoying sensualism, has filled
All human life with hydra-headed woes.

‘Falsehood demands but gold to pay the pangs
Of outraged conscience; for the slavish priest
Sets no great value on his hireling faith:
A little passing pomp, some servile souls,
Whom cowardice itself might safely chain,
Or the spare mite of avarice could bribe
To deck the triumph of their languid zeal,
Can make him minister to tyranny.
More daring crime requires a loftier meed:
Without a shudder, the slave-soldier lends
His arm to murderous deeds, and steels his heart,
When the dread eloquence of dying men,
Low mingling on the lonely field of fame,
Assails that nature, whose applause he sells
For the gross blessings of a patriot mob,
For the vile gratitude of heartless kings,
And for a cold world’s good word, — viler still!

‘There is a nobler glory, which survives
Until our being fades, and, solacing
All human care, accompanies its change;
Deserts not virtue in the dungeon’s gloom,
And, in the precincts of the palace, guides
Its footsteps through that labyrinth of crime;
Imbues his lineaments with dauntlessness,
Even when, from Power’s avenging hand, he takes
Its sweetest, last and noblest title — death;
— The consciousness of good, which neither gold,
Nor sordid fame, nor hope of heavenly bliss
Can purchase; but a life of resolute good, —
Unalterable will, quenchless desire
Of universal happiness, the heart
That beats with it in unison, the brain,

Whose ever wakeful wisdom toils to change
Reason's rich stores for its eternal weal.

'This commerce of sincerest virtue needs
No mediative signs of selfishness,
No jealous intercourse of wretched gain,
No balancings of prudence, cold and long;
In just and equal measure all is weighed,
One scale contains the sum of human weal,
And one, the good man's heart.
How vainly seek
The selfish for that happiness denied
To aught but virtue! Blind and hardened, they,
Who hope for peace amid the storms of care,
Who covet power they know not how to use,
And sigh for pleasure they refuse to give, —
Madly they frustrate still their own designs;
And, where they hope that quiet to enjoy
Which virtue pictures, bitterness of soul,
Pining regrets, and vain repentances,
Disease, disgust, and lassitude, pervade
Their valueless and miserable lives.

'But hoary-headed Selfishness has felt
Its death-blow, and is tottering to the grave:
A brighter morn awaits the human day,
When every transfer of earth's natural gifts
Shall be a commerce of good words and works;
When poverty and wealth, the thirst of fame,
The fear of infamy, disease and woe,
War with its million horrors, and fierce hell
Shall live but in the memory of Time,
Who, like a penitent libertine, shall start,
Look back, and shudder at his younger years.'

All touch, all eye, all ear,
The Spirit felt the Fairy's burning speech.
O'er the thin texture of its frame,
The varying periods painted changing glows,
As on a summer even,
When soul-enfolding music floats around,
The stainless mirror of the lake
Re-images the eastern gloom,
Mingling convulsively its purple hues
With sunset's burnished gold.

Then thus the Spirit spoke:
'It is a wild and miserable world!
Thorny, and full of care,
Which every fiend can make his prey at will.
O Fairy! in the lapse of years,
Is there no hope in store?
Will yon vast suns roll on
Interminably, still illuming
The night of so many wretched souls,
And see no hope for them?
Will not the universal Spirit e'er
Revivify this withered limb of Heaven?'

The Fairy calmly smiled
In comfort, and a kindling gleam of hope
Suffused the Spirit's lineaments.
'Oh! rest thee tranquil; chase those fearful doubts,
Which ne'er could rack an everlasting soul,
That sees the chains which bind it to its doom.
Yes! crime and misery are in yonder earth,
Falsehood, mistake, and lust;
But the eternal world
Contains at once the evil and the cure.
Some eminent in virtue shall start up,
Even in perversest time:
The truths of their pure lips, that never die,

Shall bind the scorpion falsehood with a wreath
Of ever-living flame,
Until the monster sting itself to death.

‘How sweet a scene will earth become!
Of purest spirits a pure dwelling-place,
Symphonious with the planetary spheres;
When man, with changeless Nature coalescing,
Will undertake regeneration’s work,
When its ungenial poles no longer point
To the red and baleful sun
That faintly twinkles there.

‘Spirit! on yonder earth,
Falsehood now triumphs; deadly power
Has fixed its seal upon the lip of truth!
Madness and misery are there!
The happiest is most wretched! Yet confide,
Until pure health-drops, from the cup of joy,
Fall like a dew of balm upon the world.
Now, to the scene I show, in silence turn,
And read the blood-stained charter of all woe,
Which Nature soon, with re-creating hand,
Will blot in mercy from the book of earth.
How bold the flight of Passion’s wandering wing,
How swift the step of Reason’s firmer tread,
How calm and sweet the victories of life,
How terrorless the triumph of the grave!
How powerless were the mightiest monarch’s arm,
Vain his loud threat, and impotent his frown!
How ludicrous the priest’s dogmatic roar!
The weight of his exterminating curse
How light! and his affected charity,
To suit the pressure of the changing times,
What palpable deceit! — but for thy aid,
Religion! but for thee, prolific fiend,

Who peoplest earth with demons, Hell with men,
And Heaven with slaves!

‘Thou taintest all thou look’st upon! — the stars,
Which on thy cradle beamed so brightly sweet,
Were gods to the distempered playfulness
Of thy untutored infancy: the trees,
The grass, the clouds, the mountains, and the sea,
All living things that walk, swim, creep, or fly,
Were gods: the sun had homage, and the moon
Her worshipper. Then thou becam’st, a boy,
More daring in thy frenzies: every shape,
Monstrous or vast, or beautifully wild,
Which, from sensation’s relics, fancy culls
The spirits of the air, the shuddering ghost,
The genii of the elements, the powers
That give a shape to Nature’s varied works,
Had life and place in the corrupt belief
Of thy blind heart: yet still thy youthful hands
Were pure of human blood. Then manhood gave
Its strength and ardour to thy frenzied brain;
Thine eager gaze scanned the stupendous scene,
Whose wonders mocked the knowledge of thy pride:
Their everlasting and unchanging laws
Reproached thine ignorance. Awhile thou stoodst
Baffled and gloomy; then thou didst sum up
The elements of all that thou didst know;
The changing seasons, winter’s leafless reign,
The budding of the Heaven-breathing trees,
The eternal orbs that beautify the night,
The sunrise, and the setting of the moon,
Earthquakes and wars, and poisons and disease,
And all their causes, to an abstract point
Converging, thou didst bend and called it God!
The self-sufficing, the omnipotent,
The merciful, and the avenging God!
Who, prototype of human misrule, sits

High in Heaven's realm, upon a golden throne,
Even like an earthly king; and whose dread work,
Hell, gapes for ever for the unhappy slaves
Of fate, whom He created, in his sport,
To triumph in their torments when they fell!
Earth heard the name; Earth trembled, as the smoke
Of His revenge ascended up to Heaven,
Blotting the constellations; and the cries
Of millions, butchered in sweet confidence
And unsuspecting peace, even when the bonds
Of safety were confirmed by wordy oaths
Sworn in His dreadful name, rung through the land;
Whilst innocent babes writhed on thy stubborn spear,
And thou didst laugh to hear the mother's shriek
Of maniac gladness, as the sacred steel
Felt cold in her torn entrails!

'Religion! thou wert then in manhood's prime:
But age crept on: one God would not suffice
For senile puerility; thou framedst
A tale to suit thy dotage, and to glut
Thy misery-thirsting soul, that the mad fiend
Thy wickedness had pictured might afford
A plea for sating the unnatural thirst
For murder, rapine, violence, and crime,
That still consumed thy being, even when
Thou heardst the step of Fate; — that flames might light
Thy funeral scene, and the shrill horrent shrieks
Of parents dying on the pile that burned
To light their children to thy paths, the roar
Of the encircling flames, the exulting cries
Of thine apostles, loud commingling there,
Might sate thine hungry ear
Even on the bed of death!

'But now contempt is mocking thy gray hairs;
Thou art descending to the darksome grave,

Unhonoured and unpitied, but by those
Whose pride is passing by like thine, and sheds,
Like thine, a glare that fades before the sun
Of truth, and shines but in the dreadful night
That long has lowered above the ruined world.

'Throughout these infinite orbs of mingling light,
Of which yon earth is one, is wide diffused
A Spirit of activity and life,
That knows no term, cessation, or decay;
That fades not when the lamp of earthly life,
Extinguished in the dampness of the grave,
Awhile there slumbers, more than when the babe
In the dim newness of its being feels
The impulses of sublunary things,
And all is wonder to unpractised sense:
But, active, steadfast, and eternal, still
Guides the fierce whirlwind, in the tempest roars,
Cheers in the day, breathes in the balmy groves,
Strengthens in health, and poisons in disease;
And in the storm of change, that ceaselessly
Rolls round the eternal universe, and shakes
Its undecaying battlement, presides,
Apportioning with irresistible law
The place each spring of its machine shall fill;
So that when waves on waves tumultuous heap
Confusion to the clouds, and fiercely driven
Heaven's lightnings scorch the uprooted ocean-fords,
Whilst, to the eye of shipwrecked mariner,
Lone sitting on the bare and shuddering rock,
All seems unlinked contingency and chance:
No atom of this turbulence fulfils
A vague and unnecessitated task,
Or acts but as it must and ought to act.
Even the minutest molecule of light,
That in an April sunbeam's fleeting glow
Fulfils its destined, though invisible work,

The universal Spirit guides; nor less,
When merciless ambition, or mad zeal,
Has led two hosts of dupes to battlefield,
That, blind, they there may dig each other's graves,
And call the sad work glory, does it rule
All passions: not a thought, a will, an act,
No working of the tyrant's moody mind,
Nor one misgiving of the slaves who boast
Their servitude, to hide the shame they feel,
Nor the events enchaining every will,
That from the depths of unrecorded time
Have drawn all-influencing virtue, pass
Unrecognized, or unforeseen by thee,
Soul of the Universe! eternal spring
Of life and death, of happiness and woe,
Of all that chequers the phantasmal scene
That floats before our eyes in wavering light,
Which gleams but on the darkness of our prison,
Whose chains and massy walls
We feel, but cannot see.

'Spirit of Nature! all-sufficing Power,
Necessity! thou mother of the world!
Unlike the God of human error, thou
Requir'st no prayers or praises; the caprice
Of man's weak will belongs no more to thee
Than do the changeful passions of his breast
To thy unvarying harmony: the slave,
Whose horrible lusts spread misery o'er the world,
And the good man, who lifts, with virtuous pride,
His being, in the sight of happiness,
That springs from his own works; the poison-tree
Beneath whose shade all life is withered up,
And the fair oak, whose leafy dome affords
A temple where the vows of happy love
Are registered, are equal in thy sight:
No love, no hate thou cherishest; revenge

And favouritism, and worst desire of fame
Thou know'st not: all that the wide world contains
Are but thy passive instruments, and thou
Regard'st them all with an impartial eye,
Whose joy or pain thy nature cannot feel,
Because thou hast not human sense,
Because thou art not human mind.

'Yes! when the sweeping storm of time
Has sung its death-dirge o'er the ruined fanes
And broken altars of the almighty Fiend
Whose name usurps thy honours, and the blood
Through centuries clotted there, has floated down
The tainted flood of ages, shalt thou live
Unchangeable! A shrine is raised to thee,
Which, nor the tempest-breath of time,
Nor the interminable flood,
Over earth's slight pageant rolling,
Availeth to destroy, — .
The sensitive extension of the world.
That wondrous and eternal fane,
Where pain and pleasure, good and evil join,
To do the will of strong necessity,
And life, in multitudinous shapes,
Still pressing forward where no term can be,
Like hungry and unresting flame
Curls round the eternal columns of its strength.'

7.

SPIRIT:
'I was an infant when my mother went
To see an atheist burned. She took me there:
The dark-robed priests were met around the pile;
The multitude was gazing silently;
And as the culprit passed with dauntless mien,
Tempered disdain in his unaltering eye,

Mixed with a quiet smile, shone calmly forth:
The thirsty fire crept round his manly limbs;
His resolute eyes were scorched to blindness soon;
His death-pang rent my heart! the insensate mob
Uttered a cry of triumph, and I wept.
"Weep not, child!" cried my mother, "for that man
Has said, There is no God."'

FAIRY:
'There is no God!
Nature confirms the faith his death-groan sealed:
Let heaven and earth, let man's revolving race,
His ceaseless generations tell their tale;
Let every part depending on the chain
That links it to the whole, point to the hand
That grasps its term! let every seed that falls
In silent eloquence unfold its store
Of argument; infinity within,
Infinity without, belie creation;
The exterminable spirit it contains
Is nature's only God; but human pride
Is skilful to invent most serious names
To hide its ignorance.
The name of God
Has fenced about all crime with holiness,
Himself the creature of His worshippers,
Whose names and attributes and passions change,
Seeva, Buddh, Foh, Jehovah, God, or Lord,
Even with the human dupes who build His shrines,
Still serving o'er the war-polluted world
For desolation's watchword; whether hosts
Stain His death-blushing chariot-wheels, as on
Triumphantly they roll, whilst Brahmins raise
A sacred hymn to mingle with the groans;
Or countless partners of His power divide
His tyranny to weakness; or the smoke
Of burning towns, the cries of female helplessness,

Unarmed old age, and youth, and infancy,
Horribly massacred, ascend to Heaven
In honour of His name; or, last and worst,
Earth groans beneath religion's iron age,
And priests dare babble of a God of peace,
Even whilst their hands are red with guiltless blood,
Murdering the while, uprooting every germ
Of truth, exterminating, spoiling all,
Making the earth a slaughter-house!

'O Spirit! through the sense
By which thy inner nature was apprised
Of outward shows, vague dreams have rolled,
And varied reminiscences have waked
Tablets that never fade;
All things have been imprinted there,
The stars, the sea, the earth, the sky,
Even the unshapeliest lineaments
Of wild and fleeting visions
Have left a record there
To testify of earth.

'These are my empire, for to me is given
The wonders of the human world to keep,
And Fancy's thin creations to endow
With manner, being, and reality;
Therefore a wondrous phantom, from the dreams
Of human error's dense and purblind faith,
I will evoke, to meet thy questioning.
Ahasuerus, rise!'

A strange and woe-worn wight
Arose beside the battlement,
And stood unmoving there.
His inessential figure cast no shade
Upon the golden floor;
His port and mien bore mark of many years,

And chronicles of untold ancientness
Were legible within his beamless eye:
Yet his cheek bore the mark of youth;
Freshness and vigour knit his manly frame;
The wisdom of old age was mingled there
With youth's primaeval dauntlessness;
And inexpressible woe,
Chastened by fearless resignation, gave
An awful grace to his all-speaking brow.

SPIRIT:
'Is there a God?'

AHASUERUS:
'Is there a God! — ay, an almighty God,
And vengeful as almighty! Once His voice
Was heard on earth: earth shuddered at the sound;
The fiery-visaged firmament expressed
Abhorrence, and the grave of Nature yawned
To swallow all the dauntless and the good
That dared to hurl defiance at His throne,
Girt as it was with power. None but slaves
Survived, — cold-blooded slaves, who did the work
Of tyrannous omnipotence; whose souls
No honest indignation ever urged
To elevated daring, to one deed
Which gross and sensual self did not pollute.
These slaves built temples for the omnipotent Fiend,
Gorgeous and vast: the costly altars smoked
With human blood, and hideous paeans rung
Through all the long-drawn aisles. A murderer heard
His voice in Egypt, one whose gifts and arts
Had raised him to his eminence in power,
Accomplice of omnipotence in crime,
And confidant of the all-knowing one.
These were Jehovah's words: —

‘From an eternity of idleness
I, God, awoke; in seven days’ toil made earth
From nothing; rested, and created man:
I placed him in a Paradise, and there
Planted the tree of evil, so that he
Might eat and perish, and My soul procure
Wherewith to sate its malice, and to turn,
Even like a heartless conqueror of the earth,
All misery to My fame. The race of men
Chosen to My honour, with impunity
May sate the lusts I planted in their heart.
Here I command thee hence to lead them on,
Until, with hardened feet, their conquering troops
Wade on the promised soil through woman’s blood,
And make My name be dreaded through the land.
Yet ever-burning flame and ceaseless woe
Shall be the doom of their eternal souls,
With every soul on this ungrateful earth,
Virtuous or vicious, weak or strong, — even all
Shall perish, to fulfil the blind revenge
(Which you, to men, call justice) of their God.’

The murderer’s brow
Quivered with horror.
‘God omnipotent,
Is there no mercy? must our punishment
Be endless? will long ages roll away,
And see no term? Oh! wherefore hast Thou made
In mockery and wrath this evil earth?
Mercy becomes the powerful — be but just:
O God! repent and save.’

‘One way remains:
I will beget a Son, and He shall bear
The sins of all the world; He shall arise
In an unnoticed corner of the earth,
And there shall die upon a cross, and purge

The universal crime; so that the few
On whom My grace descends, those who are marked
As vessels to the honour of their God,
May credit this strange sacrifice, and save
Their souls alive: millions shall live and die,
Who ne'er shall call upon their Saviour's name,
But, unredeemed, go to the gaping grave.
Thousands shall deem it an old woman's tale,
Such as the nurses frighten babes withal:
These in a gulf of anguish and of flame
Shall curse their reprobation endlessly,
Yet tenfold pangs shall force them to avow,
Even on their beds of torment, where they howl,
My honour, and the justice of their doom.
What then avail their virtuous deeds, their thoughts
Of purity, with radiant genius bright,
Or lit with human reason's earthly ray?
Many are called, but few will I elect.
Do thou My bidding, Moses!'
Even the murderer's cheek
Was blanched with horror, and his quivering lips
Scarce faintly uttered—'O almighty One,
I tremble and obey!'

'O Spirit! centuries have set their seal
On this heart of many wounds, and loaded brain,
Since the Incarnate came: humbly He came,
Veiling His horrible Godhead in the shape
Of man, scorned by the world, His name unheard,
Save by the rabble of His native town,
Even as a parish demagogue. He led
The crowd; He taught them justice, truth, and peace,
In semblance; but He lit within their souls
The quenchless flames of zeal, and blessed the sword
He brought on earth to satiate with the blood
Of truth and freedom His malignant soul.
At length His mortal frame was led to death.

I stood beside Him: on the torturing cross
No pain assailed His unterrestrial sense;
And yet He groaned. Indignantly I summed
The massacres and miseries which His name
Had sanctioned in my country, and I cried,
"Go! Go!" in mockery.
A smile of godlike malice reillumed
His fading lineaments.—"I go," He cried,
"But thou shalt wander o'er the unquiet earth
Eternally." — The dampness of the grave
Bathed my imperishable front. I fell,
And long lay tranced upon the charmed soil.
When I awoke Hell burned within my brain,
Which staggered on its seat; for all around
The mouldering relics of my kindred lay,
Even as the Almighty's ire arrested them,
And in their various attitudes of death
My murdered children's mute and eyeless skulls
Glared ghastily upon me.
But my soul,
From sight and sense of the polluting woe
Of tyranny, had long learned to prefer
Hell's freedom to the servitude of Heaven.
Therefore I rose, and dauntlessly began
My lonely and unending pilgrimage,
Resolved to wage unweariable war
With my almighty Tyrant, and to hurl
Defiance at His impotence to harm
Beyond the curse I bore. The very hand
That barred my passage to the peaceful grave
Has crushed the earth to misery, and given
Its empire to the chosen of His slaves.
These have I seen, even from the earliest dawn
Of weak, unstable and precarious power,
Then preaching peace, as now they practise war;
So, when they turned but from the massacre
Of unoffending infidels, to quench

Their thirst for ruin in the very blood
That flowed in their own veins, and pitiless zeal
Froze every human feeling, as the wife
Sheathed in her husband's heart the sacred steel,
Even whilst its hopes were dreaming of her love;
And friends to friends, brothers to brothers stood
Opposed in bloodiest battle-field, and war,
Scarce satiable by fate's last death-draught, waged,
Drunk from the winepress of the Almighty's wrath;
Whilst the red cross, in mockery of peace,
Pointed to victory! When the fray was done,
No remnant of the exterminated faith
Survived to tell its ruin, but the flesh,
With putrid smoke poisoning the atmosphere,
That rotted on the half-extinguished pile.

'Yes! I have seen God's worshippers unsheathe
The sword of His revenge, when grace descended,
Confirming all unnatural impulses,
To sanctify their desolating deeds;
And frantic priests waved the ill-omened cross
O'er the unhappy earth: then shone the sun
On showers of gore from the upflashing steel
Of safe assassination, and all crime
Made stingless by the Spirits of the Lord,
And blood-red rainbows canopied the land.
'Spirit, no year of my eventful being
Has passed unstained by crime and misery,
Which flows from God's own faith. I've marked His slaves
With tongues whose lies are venomous, beguile
The insensate mob, and, whilst one hand was red
With murder, feign to stretch the other out
For brotherhood and peace; and that they now
Babble of love and mercy, whilst their deeds
Are marked with all the narrowness and crime
That Freedom's young arm dare not yet chastise,
Reason may claim our gratitude, who now

Establishing the imperishable throne
Of truth, and stubborn virtue, maketh vain
The unprevailing malice of my Foe,
Whose bootless rage heaps torments for the brave,
Adds impotent eternities to pain,
Whilst keenest disappointment racks His breast
To see the smiles of peace around them play,
To frustrate or to sanctify their doom.

'Thus have I stood, — through a wild waste of years
Struggling with whirlwinds of mad agony,
Yet peaceful, and serene, and self-enshrined,
Mocking my powerless Tyrant's horrible curse
With stubborn and unalterable will,
Even as a giant oak, which Heaven's fierce flame
Had scathed in the wilderness, to stand
A monument of fadeless ruin there;
Yet peacefully and movelessly it braves
The midnight conflict of the wintry storm,
As in the sunlight's calm it spreads
Its worn and withered arms on high
To meet the quiet of a summer's noon.'

The Fairy waved her wand:
Ahasuerus fled
Fast as the shapes of mingled shade and mist,
That lurk in the glens of a twilight grove,
Flee from the morning beam:
The matter of which dreams are made
Not more endowed with actual life
Than this phantasmal portraiture
Of wandering human thought.

8.

THE FAIRY:
'The Present and the Past thou hast beheld:
It was a desolate sight. Now, Spirit, learn

The secrets of the Future. — Time!
Unfold the brooding pinion of thy gloom,
Render thou up thy half-devoured babes,
And from the cradles of eternity,
Where millions lie lulled to their portioned sleep
By the deep murmuring stream of passing things,
Tear thou that gloomy shroud. — Spirit, behold
Thy glorious destiny!'

Joy to the Spirit came.
Through the wide rent in Time's eternal veil,
Hope was seen beaming through the mists of fear:
Earth was no longer Hell;
Love, freedom, health, had given
Their ripeness to the manhood of its prime,
And all its pulses beat
Symphonious to the planetary spheres:
Then dulcet music swelled
Concordant with the life-strings of the soul;
It throbbed in sweet and languid beatings there,
Catching new life from transitory death, —
Like the vague sighings of a wind at even,
That wakes the wavelets of the slumbering sea
And dies on the creation of its breath,
And sinks and rises, fails and swells by fits:
Was the pure stream of feeling
That sprung from these sweet notes,
And o'er the Spirit's human sympathies
With mild and gentle motion calmly flowed.

Joy to the Spirit came, —
Such joy as when a lover sees
The chosen of his soul in happiness,
And witnesses her peace
Whose woe to him were bitterer than death,
Sees her unfaded cheek
Glow mantling in first luxury of health,

Thrills with her lovely eyes,
Which like two stars amid the heaving main
Sparkle through liquid bliss.

Then in her triumph spoke the Fairy Queen:
‘I will not call the ghost of ages gone
To unfold the frightful secrets of its lore;
The present now is past,
And those events that desolate the earth
Have faded from the memory of Time,
Who dares not give reality to that
Whose being I annul. To me is given
The wonders of the human world to keep,
Space, matter, time, and mind. Futurity
Exposes now its treasure; let the sight
Renew and strengthen all thy failing hope.
O human Spirit! spur thee to the goal
Where virtue fixes universal peace,
And midst the ebb and flow of human things,
Show somewhat stable, somewhat certain still,
A lighthouse o’er the wild of dreary waves.

‘The habitable earth is full of bliss;
Those wastes of frozen billows that were hurled
By everlasting snowstorms round the poles,
Where matter dared not vegetate or live,
But ceaseless frost round the vast solitude
Bound its broad zone of stillness, are unloosed;
And fragrant zephyrs there from spicy isles
Ruffle the placid ocean-deep, that rolls
Its broad, bright surges to the sloping sand,
Whose roar is wakened into echoings sweet
To murmur through the Heaven-breathing groves
And melodize with man’s blest nature there.

‘Those deserts of immeasurable sand,
Whose age-collected fervours scarce allowed

A bird to live, a blade of grass to spring,
Where the shrill chirp of the green lizard's love
Broke on the sultry silentness alone,
Now teem with countless rills and shady woods,
Cornfields and pastures and white cottages;
And where the startled wilderness beheld
A savage conqueror stained in kindred blood,
A tigress sating with the flesh of lambs
The unnatural famine of her toothless cubs,
Whilst shouts and howlings through the desert rang,
Sloping and smooth the daisy-spangled lawn,
Offering sweet incense to the sunrise, smiles
To see a babe before his mother's door,
Sharing his morning's meal
With the green and golden basilisk
That comes to lick his feet.

'Those trackless deeps, where many a weary sail
Has seen above the illimitable plain,
Morning on night, and night on morning rise,
Whilst still no land to greet the wanderer spread
Its shadowy mountains on the sun-bright sea,
Where the loud roarings of the tempest-waves
So long have mingled with the gusty wind
In melancholy loneliness, and swept
The desert of those ocean solitudes,
But vocal to the sea-bird's harrowing shriek,
The bellowing monster, and the rushing storm,
Now to the sweet and many-mingling sounds
Of kindliest human impulses respond.
Those lonely realms bright garden-isles begem,
With lightsome clouds and shining seas between,
And fertile valleys, resonant with bliss,
Whilst green woods overcanopy the wave,
Which like a toil-worn labourer leaps to shore,
To meet the kisses of the flow'rets there.

‘All things are recreated, and the flame
Of consentaneous love inspires all life:
The fertile bosom of the earth gives suck
To myriads, who still grow beneath her care,
Rewarding her with their pure perfectness:
The balmy breathings of the wind inhale
Her virtues, and diffuse them all abroad:
Health floats amid the gentle atmosphere,
Glows in the fruits, and mantles on the stream:
No storms deform the beaming brow of Heaven,
Nor scatter in the freshness of its pride
The foliage of the ever-verdant trees;
But fruits are ever ripe, flowers ever fair,
And Autumn proudly bears her matron grace,
Kindling a flush on the fair cheek of Spring,
Whose virgin bloom beneath the ruddy fruit
Reflects its tint, and blushes into love.

‘The lion now forgets to thirst for blood:
There might you see him sporting in the sun
Beside the dreadless kid; his claws are sheathed,
His teeth are harmless, custom’s force has made
His nature as the nature of a lamb.
Like passion’s fruit, the nightshade’s tempting bane
Poisons no more the pleasure it bestows:
All bitterness is past; the cup of joy
Unmingled mantles to the goblet’s brim,
And courts the thirsty lips it fled before.

‘But chief, ambiguous Man, he that can know
More misery, and dream more joy than all;
Whose keen sensations thrill within his breast
To mingle with a loftier instinct there,
Lending their power to pleasure and to pain,
Yet raising, sharpening, and refining each;
Who stands amid the ever-varying world,
The burthen or the glory of the earth;

He chief perceives the change, his being notes
The gradual renovation, and defines
Each movement of its progress on his mind.

‘Man, where the gloom of the long polar night
Lowers o’er the snow-clad rocks and frozen soil,
Where scarce the hardiest herb that braves the frost
Basks in the moonlight’s ineffectual glow,
Shrank with the plants, and darkened with the night;
His chilled and narrow energies, his heart,
Insensible to courage, truth, or love,
His stunted stature and imbecile frame,
Marked him for some abortion of the earth,
Fit compeer of the bears that roamed around,
Whose habits and enjoyments were his own:
His life a feverish dream of stagnant woe,
Whose meagre wants, but scantily fulfilled,
Apprised him ever of the joyless length
Which his short being’s wretchedness had reached;
His death a pang which famine, cold and toil
Long on the mind, whilst yet the vital spark
Clung to the body stubbornly, had brought:
All was inflicted here that Earth’s revenge
Could wreak on the infringers of her law;
One curse alone was spared — the name of God.

‘Nor where the tropics bound the realms of day
With a broad belt of mingling cloud and flame,
Where blue mists through the unmoving atmosphere
Scattered the seeds of pestilence, and fed
Unnatural vegetation, where the land
Teemed with all earthquake, tempest and disease,
Was Man a nobler being; slavery
Had crushed him to his country’s bloodstained dust;
Or he was bartered for the fame of power,
Which all internal impulses destroying,
Makes human will an article of trade;

Or he was changed with Christians for their gold,
And dragged to distant isles, where to the sound
Of the flesh-mangling scourge, he does the work
Of all-polluting luxury and wealth,
Which doubly visits on the tyrants' heads
The long-protracted fulness of their woe;
Or he was led to legal butchery,
To turn to worms beneath that burning sun,
Where kings first leagued against the rights of men,
And priests first traded with the name of God.

'Even where the milder zone afforded Man
A seeming shelter, yet contagion there,
Blighting his being with unnumbered ills,
Spread like a quenchless fire; nor truth till late
Availed to arrest its progress, or create
That peace which first in bloodless victory waved
Her snowy standard o'er this favoured clime:
There man was long the train-bearer of slaves,
The mimic of surrounding misery,
The jackal of ambition's lion-rage,
The bloodhound of religion's hungry zeal.
'Here now the human being stands adorning
This loveliest earth with taintless body and mind;
Blessed from his birth with all bland impulses,
Which gently in his noble bosom wake
All kindly passions and all pure desires.
Him, still from hope to hope the bliss pursuing
Which from the exhaustless lore of human weal
Dawns on the virtuous mind, the thoughts that rise
In time-destroying infiniteness, gift
With self-enshrined eternity, that mocks
The unprevailing hoariness of age,
And man, once fleeting o'er the transient scene
Swift as an unremembered vision, stands
Immortal upon earth: no longer now
He slays the lamb that looks him in the face,

And horribly devours his mangled flesh,
Which, still avenging Nature's broken law,
Kindled all putrid humours in his frame,
All evil passions, and all vain belief,
Hatred, despair, and loathing in his mind,
The germs of misery, death, disease, and crime.
No longer now the winged habitants,
That in the woods their sweet lives sing away, —
Flee from the form of man; but gather round,
And prune their sunny feathers on the hands
Which little children stretch in friendly sport
Towards these dreadless partners of their play.
All things are void of terror: Man has lost
His terrible prerogative, and stands
An equal amidst equals: happiness
And science dawn though late upon the earth;
Peace cheers the mind, health renovates the frame;
Disease and pleasure cease to mingle here,
Reason and passion cease to combat there;
Whilst each unfettered o'er the earth extend
Their all-subduing energies, and wield
The sceptre of a vast dominion there;
Whilst every shape and mode of matter lends
Its force to the omnipotence of mind,
Which from its dark mine drags the gem of truth
To decorate its Paradise of peace.'

9.

'O happy Earth! reality of Heaven!
To which those restless souls that ceaselessly
Throng through the human universe, aspire;
Thou consummation of all mortal hope!
Thou glorious prize of blindly-working will!
Whose rays, diffused throughout all space and time,
Verge to one point and blend for ever there:
Of purest spirits thou pure dwelling-place!

Where care and sorrow, impotence and crime,
Languor, disease, and ignorance dare not come:
O happy Earth, reality of Heaven!

‘Genius has seen thee in her passionate dreams,
And dim forebodings of thy loveliness
Haunting the human heart, have there entwined
Those rooted hopes of some sweet place of bliss
Where friends and lovers meet to part no more.
Thou art the end of all desire and will,
The product of all action; and the souls
That by the paths of an aspiring change
Have reached thy haven of perpetual peace,
There rest from the eternity of toil
That framed the fabric of thy perfectness.

‘Even Time, the conqueror, fled thee in his fear;
That hoary giant, who, in lonely pride,
So long had ruled the world, that nations fell
Beneath his silent footstep. Pyramids,
That for millenniums had withstood the tide
Of human things, his storm-breath drove in sand
Across that desert where their stones survived
The name of him whose pride had heaped them there.
Yon monarch, in his solitary pomp,
Was but the mushroom of a summer day,
That his light-winged footstep pressed to dust:
Time was the king of earth: all things gave way
Before him, but the fixed and virtuous will,
The sacred sympathies of soul and sense,
That mocked his fury and prepared his fall.

‘Yet slow and gradual dawned the morn of love;
Long lay the clouds of darkness o’er the scene,
Till from its native Heaven they rolled away:
First, Crime triumphant o’er all hope careered
Unblushing, undisguising, bold and strong;

Whilst Falsehood, tricked in Virtue's attributes,
Long sanctified all deeds of vice and woe,
Till done by her own venomous sting to death,
She left the moral world without a law,
No longer fettering Passion's fearless wing, —
Nor searing Reason with the brand of God.
Then steadily the happy ferment worked;
Reason was free; and wild though Passion went
Through tangled glens and wood-embosomed meads,
Gathering a garland of the strangest flowers,
Yet like the bee returning to her queen,
She bound the sweetest on her sister's brow,
Who meek and sober kissed the sportive child,
No longer trembling at the broken rod.

'Mild was the slow necessity of death:
The tranquil spirit failed beneath its grasp,
Without a groan, almost without a fear,
Calm as a voyager to some distant land,
And full of wonder, full of hope as he.
The deadly germs of languor and disease
Died in the human frame, and Purity
Blessed with all gifts her earthly worshippers.
How vigorous then the athletic form of age!
How clear its open and unwrinkled brow!
Where neither avarice, cunning, pride, nor care,
Had stamped the seal of gray deformity
On all the mingling lineaments of time.
How lovely the intrepid front of youth!
Which meek-eyed courage decked with freshest grace; —
Courage of soul, that dreaded not a name,
And elevated will, that journeyed on
Through life's phantasmal scene in fearlessness,
With virtue, love, and pleasure, hand in hand.

'Then, that sweet bondage which is Freedom's self,
And rivets with sensation's softest tie

The kindred sympathies of human souls,
Needed no fetters of tyrannic law:
Those delicate and timid impulses
In Nature's primal modesty arose,
And with undoubted confidence disclosed
The growing longings of its dawning love,
Unchecked by dull and selfish chastity,
That virtue of the cheaply virtuous,
Who pride themselves in senselessness and frost.
No longer prostitution's venomed bane
Poisoned the springs of happiness and life;
Woman and man, in confidence and love,
Equal and free and pure together trod
The mountain-paths of virtue, which no more
Were stained with blood from many a pilgrim's feet.

'Then, where, through distant ages, long in pride
The palace of the monarch-slave had mocked
Famine's faint groan, and Penury's silent tear,
A heap of crumbling ruins stood, and threw
Year after year their stones upon the field,
Wakening a lonely echo; and the leaves
Of the old thorn, that on the topmost tower
Usurped the royal ensign's grandeur, shook
In the stern storm that swayed the topmost tower
And whispered strange tales in the Whirlwind's ear.
'Low through the lone cathedral's roofless aisles
The melancholy winds a death-dirge sung:
It were a sight of awfulness to see
The works of faith and slavery, so vast,
So sumptuous, yet so perishing withal!
Even as the corpse that rests beneath its wall.
A thousand mourners deck the pomp of death
To-day, the breathing marble glows above
To decorate its memory, and tongues
Are busy of its life: to-morrow, worms
In silence and in darkness seize their prey.

‘Within the massy prison’s mouldering courts,
Fearless and free the ruddy children played,
Weaving gay chaplets for their innocent brows
With the green ivy and the red wallflower,
That mock the dungeon’s unavailing gloom;
The ponderous chains, and gratings of strong iron,
There rusted amid heaps of broken stone
That mingled slowly with their native earth:
There the broad beam of day, which feebly once
Lighted the cheek of lean Captivity
With a pale and sickly glare, then freely shone
On the pure smiles of infant playfulness:
No more the shuddering voice of hoarse Despair
Pealed through the echoing vaults, but soothing notes
Of ivy-fingered winds and gladsome birds
And merriment were resonant around.

‘These ruins soon left not a wreck behind:
Their elements, wide scattered o’er the globe,
To happier shapes were moulded, and became
Ministrant to all blissful impulses:
Thus human things were perfected, and earth,
Even as a child beneath its mother’s love,
Was strengthened in all excellence, and grew
Fairer and nobler with each passing year.

‘Now Time his dusky pennons o’er the scene
Closes in steadfast darkness, and the past
Fades from our charmed sight. My task is done:
Thy lore is learned. Earth’s wonders are thine own,
With all the fear and all the hope they bring.
My spells are passed: the present now recurs.
Ah me! a pathless wilderness remains
Yet unsubdued by man’s reclaiming hand.

‘Yet, human Spirit, bravely hold thy course,
Let virtue teach thee firmly to pursue

The gradual paths of an aspiring change:
For birth and life and death, and that strange state
Before the naked soul has found its home,
All tend to perfect happiness, and urge
The restless wheels of being on their way,
Whose flashing spokes, instinct with infinite life,
Bicker and burn to gain their destined goal:
For birth but wakes the spirit to the sense
Of outward shows, whose unexperienced shape
New modes of passion to its frame may lend;
Life is its state of action, and the store
Of all events is aggregated there
That variegate the eternal universe;
Death is a gate of dreariness and gloom,
That leads to azure isles and beaming skies
And happy regions of eternal hope.
Therefore, O Spirit! fearlessly bear on:
Though storms may break the primrose on its stalk,
Though frosts may blight the freshness of its bloom,
Yet Spring's awakening breath will woo the earth,
To feed with kindliest dews its favourite flower,
That blooms in mossy banks and darksome glens,
Lighting the greenwood with its sunny smile.

'Fear not then, Spirit, Death's disrobing hand,
So welcome when the tyrant is awake,
So welcome when the bigot's hell-torch burns;
'Tis but the voyage of a darksome hour,
The transient gulf-dream of a startling sleep.
Death is no foe to Virtue: earth has seen
Love's brightest roses on the scaffold bloom,
Mingling with Freedom's fadeless laurels there,
And presaging the truth of visioned bliss.
Are there not hopes within thee, which this scene
Of linked and gradual being has confirmed?
Whose stingings bade thy heart look further still,
When, to the moonlight walk by Henry led,

Sweetly and sadly thou didst talk of death?
And wilt thou rudely tear them from thy breast,
Listening supinely to a bigot's creed,
Or tamely crouching to the tyrant's rod,
Whose iron thongs are red with human gore?
Never: but bravely bearing on, thy will
Is destined an eternal war to wage
With tyranny and falsehood, and uproot
The germs of misery from the human heart.
Thine is the hand whose piety would soothe
The thorny pillow of unhappy crime,
Whose impotence an easy pardon gains,
Watching its wanderings as a friend's disease:
Thine is the brow whose mildness would defy
Its fiercest rage, and brave its sternest will,
When fenced by power and master of the world.
Thou art sincere and good; of resolute mind,
Free from heart-withering custom's cold control,
Of passion lofty, pure and unsubdued.
Earth's pride and meanness could not vanquish thee,
And therefore art thou worthy of the boon
Which thou hast now received: Virtue shall keep
Thy footsteps in the path that thou hast trod,
And many days of beaming hope shall bless
Thy spotless life of sweet and sacred love.
Go, happy one, and give that bosom joy
Whose sleepless spirit waits to catch
Light, life and rapture from thy smile.'

The Fairy waves her wand of charm.
Speechless with bliss the Spirit mounts the car,
That rolled beside the battlement,
Bending her beamy eyes in thankful ness.
Again the enchanted steeds were yoked,
Again the burning wheels inflame
The steep descent of Heaven's untrodden way.
Fast and far the chariot flew:

The vast and fiery globes that rolled
Around the Fairy's palace-gate
Lessened by slow degrees and soon appeared
Such tiny twinklers as the planet orbs
That there attendant on the solar power
With borrowed light pursued their narrower way.

Earth floated then below:
The chariot paused a moment there;
The Spirit then descended:
The restless coursers pawed the ungenial soil,
Snuffed the gross air, and then, their errand done,
Unfurled their pinions to the winds of Heaven.

The Body and the Soul united then,
A gentle start convulsed Ianthe's frame:
Her veiny eyelids quietly unclosed;
Moveless awhile the dark blue orbs remained:
She looked around in wonder and beheld
Henry, who kneeled in silence by her couch,
Watching her sleep with looks of speechless love,
And the bright beaming stars
That through the casement shone.

NOTES ON QUEEN MAB.

SHELLEY'S NOTES.

1. 242, 243: —

The sun's unclouded orb
Rolled through the black concave.

Beyond our atmosphere the sun would appear a rayless orb of fire in the midst of a black concave. The equal diffusion of its light on earth is owing to the refraction of the rays by the atmosphere, and their reflection from other bodies. Light consists either of vibrations propagated through a subtle medium, or of numerous minute particles repelled in all directions from the luminous body. Its velocity greatly exceeds that of any substance with which we are acquainted: observations on the eclipses of Jupiter's satellites have demonstrated that light takes up no more than 8 minutes 7 seconds in passing from the sun to the earth, a distance of 95,000,000 miles. — Some idea may be gained of the immense distance of the fixed stars when it is computed that many years would elapse before light could reach this earth from the nearest of them; yet in one year light travels 5,422,400,000,000 miles, which is a distance 5,707,600 times greater than that of the sun from the earth.

1. 252, 253: —

Whilst round the chariot's way
Innumerable systems rolled.

The plurality of worlds, — the indefinite immensity of the universe, is a most awful subject of contemplation. He who rightly feels its mystery and grandeur is in no danger of seduction from the falsehoods of religious systems, or of deifying the principle of the universe. It is impossible to believe that the Spirit that pervades this infinite machine begat a son upon the body of a Jewish woman; or is angered at the consequences of that necessity, which is a synonym of itself. All that miserable tale of the Devil, and Eve, and an Intercessor, with the childish mummeries of the God of the

Jews, is irreconcilable with the knowledge of the stars. The works of His fingers have borne witness against Him.

The nearest of the fixed stars is inconceivably distant from the earth, and they are probably proportionably distant from each other. By a calculation of the velocity of light, Sirius is supposed to be at least 54,224,000,000,000 miles from the earth. (See Nicholson's "Encyclopedia", article Light.) That which appears only like a thin and silvery cloud streaking the heaven is in effect composed of innumerable clusters of suns, each shining with its own light, and illuminating numbers of planets that revolve around them. Millions and millions of suns are ranged around us, all attended by innumerable worlds, yet calm, regular, and harmonious, all keeping the paths of immutable necessity.

4. 178, 179: —

These are the hired bravos who defend
The tyrant's throne.

To employ murder as a means of justice is an idea which a man of an enlightened mind will not dwell upon with pleasure. To march forth in rank and file, and all the pomp of streamers and trumpets, for the purpose of shooting at our fellow-men as a mark; to inflict upon them all the variety of wound and anguish; to leave them weltering in their blood; to wander over the field of desolation, and count the number of the dying and the dead, — are employments which in thesis we may maintain to be necessary, but which no good man will contemplate with gratulation and delight. A battle we suppose is won: — thus truth is established, thus the cause of justice is confirmed! It surely requires no common sagacity to discern the connexion between this immense heap of calamities and the assertion of truth or the maintenance of justice.

'Kings, and ministers of state, the real authors of the calamity, sit unmolested in their cabinet, while those against whom the fury of the storm is directed are, for the most part, persons who have been trepanned into the service, or who are dragged unwillingly from their peaceful homes into the field of battle. A soldier is a man whose business it is to kill those who never offended him, and who are the innocent martyrs of other men's

iniquities. Whatever may become of the abstract question of the justifiableness of war, it seems impossible that the soldier should not be a depraved and unnatural being.

To these more serious and momentous considerations it may be proper to add a recollection of the ridiculousness of the military character. Its first constituent is obedience: a soldier is, of all descriptions of men, the most completely a machine; yet his profession inevitably teaches him something of dogmatism, swaggering, and sell-consequence: he is like the puppet of a showman, who, at the very time he is made to strut and swell and display the most farcical airs, we perfectly know cannot assume the most insignificant gesture, advance either to the right or the left, but as he is moved by his exhibitor.' — Godwin's "Enquirer", Essay 5.

I will here subjoin a little poem, so strongly expressive of my abhorrence of despotism and falsehood, that I fear lest it never again may be depictured so vividly. This opportunity is perhaps the only one that ever will occur of rescuing it from oblivion.

FALSEHOOD AND VICE.

A DIALOGUE.

Whilst monarchs laughed upon their thrones
To hear a famished nation's groans,
And hugged the wealth wrung from the woe
That makes its eyes and veins o'erflow, —
Those thrones, high built upon the heaps
Of bones where frenzied Famine sleeps,
Where Slavery wields her scourge of iron,
Red with mankind's unheeded gore,
And War's mad fiends the scene environ,
Mingling with shrieks a drunken roar,
There Vice and Falsehood took their stand,
High raised above the unhappy land.

FALSEHOOD:
Brother! arise from the dainty fare,
Which thousands have toiled and bled to bestow;
A finer feast for thy hungry ear
Is the news that I bring of human woe.

VICE:
And, secret one, what hast thou done,
To compare, in thy tumid pride, with me?
I, whose career, through the blasted year,
Has been tracked by despair and agony.

FALSEHOOD:
What have I done! — I have torn the robe
From baby Truth's unsheltered form,
And round the desolated globe
Borne safely the bewildering charm:
My tyrant-slaves to a dungeon-floor
Have bound the fearless innocent,
And streams of fertilizing gore
Flow from her bosom's hideous rent,
Which this unfailing dagger gave…

I dread that blood! — no more — this day
Is ours, though her eternal ray
Must shine upon our grave.
Yet know, proud Vice, had I not given
To thee the robe I stole from Heaven,
Thy shape of ugliness and fear
Had never gained admission here.

VICE:
And know, that had I disdained to toil,
But sate in my loathsome cave the while,
And ne'er to these hateful sons of Heaven,
GOLD, MONARCHY, and MURDER, given;
Hadst thou with all thine art essayed
One of thy games then to have played,
With all thine overweening boast,
Falsehood! I tell thee thou hadst lost! —
Yet wherefore this dispute? — we tend,
Fraternal, to one common end;
In this cold grave beneath my feet,
Will our hopes, our fears, and our labours, meet.

FALSEHOOD:
I brought my daughter, RELIGION, on earth:
She smothered Reason's babes in their birth;
But dreaded their mother's eye severe, —
So the crocodile slunk off slily in fear,
And loosed her bloodhounds from the den….
They started from dreams of slaughtered men,
And, by the light of her poison eye,
Did her work o'er the wide earth frightfully:
The dreadful stench of her torches' flare,
Fed with human fat, polluted the air:
The curses, the shrieks, the ceaseless cries
Of the many-mingling miseries,
As on she trod, ascended high

And trumpeted my victory! —
Brother, tell what thou hast done.

VICE:
I have extinguished the noonday sun,
In the carnage-smoke of battles won:
Famine, Murder, Hell and Power
Were glutted in that glorious hour
Which searchless fate had stamped for me
With the seal of her security…
For the bloated wretch on yonder throne
Commanded the bloody fray to rise.
Like me he joyed at the stifled moan
Wrung from a nation's miseries;
While the snakes, whose slime even him DEFILED,
In ecstasies of malice smiled:
They thought 'twas theirs, — but mine the deed!
Theirs is the toil, but mine the meed —
Ten thousand victims madly bleed.
They dream that tyrants goad them there
With poisonous war to taint the air:
These tyrants, on their beds of thorn,
Swell with the thoughts of murderous fame,
And with their gains to lift my name
Restless they plan from night to morn:
I — I do all; without my aid
Thy daughter, that relentless maid,
Could never o'er a death-bed urge
The fury of her venomed scourge.

FALSEHOOD:
Brother, well: — the world is ours;
And whether thou or I have won,
The pestilence expectant lowers
On all beneath yon blasted sun.
Our joys, our toils, our honours meet
In the milk-white and wormy winding-sheet:

A short-lived hope, unceasing care,
Some heartless scraps of godly prayer,
A moody curse, and a frenzied sleep
Ere gapes the grave's unclosing deep,
A tyrant's dream, a coward's start,
The ice that clings to a priestly heart,
A judge's frown, a courtier's smile,
Make the great whole for which we toil;
And, brother, whether thou or I
Have done the work of misery,
It little boots: thy toil and pain,
Without my aid, were more than vain;
And but for thee I ne'er had sate
The guardian of Heaven's palace gate.

5. 1, 2: —

Thus do the generations of the earth
Go to the grave, and issue from the womb.

'One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.' — Ecclesiastes, chapter 1 verses 4-7.

5. 4-6.

Even as the leaves
Which the keen frost-wind of the waning year
Has scattered on the forest soil.

Oin per phullon genee, toiede kai andron.
Phulla ta men t' anemos chamadis cheei, alla de th' ule
Telethoosa phuei, earos d' epigignetai ore.
Os andron genee, e men phuei, e d' apolegei.

Iliad Z, line 146.

5. 58: — The mob of peasants, nobles, priests, and kings.

Suave mari magno turbantibus aequora ventis
E terra magnum alterius spectare laborem;
Non quia vexari quemquam est iucunda voluptas,
Sed quibus ipse malis careas quia cernere suave est.
Suave etiam belli certamina magna tueri
Per campos instructa, tua sine parte pericli;
Sed nil dulcius est bene quam munita tenere
Edita doctrina sapientum templa serena,
Despicere undo queas alios, passimque videre
Errare atque viam palantis quaerere vitae;
Certare ingenio; contendere nobilitate;
Noctes atque dies niti praestante labore
Ad summas emergere opes, rerumque potiri.
O miseras hominum mentes! O pectora caeca!

Lucret. lib. 2.

5. 93, 94.

And statesmen boast
Of wealth!

There is no real wealth but the labour of man. Were the mountains of gold and the valleys of silver, the world would not be one grain of corn the richer; no one comfort would be added to the human race. In consequence of our consideration for the precious metals, one man is enabled to heap to himself luxuries at the expense of the necessaries of his neighbour; a system admirably fitted to produce all the varieties of disease and crime, which never fail to characterize the two extremes of opulence and penury. A speculator takes pride to himself as the promoter of his country's prosperity, who employs a number of hands in the manufacture of articles avowedly destitute of use, or subservient only to the unhallowed cravings of luxury and ostentation. The nobleman, who employs the peasants of his neighbourhood in building his palaces, until 'jam pauca aratro jugera regiae

moles relinquunt,' flatters himself that he has gained the title of a patriot by yielding to the impulses of vanity. The show and pomp of courts adduce the same apology for its continuance; and many a fete has been given, many a woman has eclipsed her beauty by her dress, to benefit the labouring poor and to encourage trade. Who does not see that this is a remedy which aggravates whilst it palliates the countless diseases of society? The poor are set to labour, — for what? Not the food for which they famish: not the blankets for want of which their babes are frozen by the cold of their miserable hovels: not those comforts of civilization without which civilized man is far more miserable than the meanest savage; oppressed as he is by all its insidious evils, within the daily and taunting prospect of its innumerable benefits assiduously exhibited before him: — no; for the pride of power, for the miserable isolation of pride, for the false pleasures of the hundredth part of society. No greater evidence is afforded of the wide extended and radical mistakes of civilized man than this fact: those arts which are essential to his very being are held in the greatest contempt; employments are lucrative in an inverse ratio to their usefulness (See Rousseau, "De l'Inegalite parmi les Hommes", note 7.): the jeweller, the toyman, the actor gains fame and wealth by the exercise of his useless and ridiculous art; whilst the cultivator of the earth, he without whom society must cease to subsist, struggles through contempt and penury, and perishes by that famine which but for his unceasing exertions would annihilate the rest of mankind.

I will not insult common sense by insisting on the doctrine of the natural equality of man. The question is not concerning its desirableness, but its practicability: so far as it is practicable, it is desirable. That state of human society which approaches nearer to an equal partition of its benefits and evils should, caeteris paribus, be preferred: but so long as we conceive that a wanton expenditure of human labour, not for the necessities, not even for the luxuries of the mass of society, but for the egotism and ostentation of a few of its members, is defensible on the ground of public justice, so long we neglect to approximate to the redemption of the human race.

Labour is required for physical, and leisure for moral improvement: from the former of these advantages the rich, and from the latter the poor, by the inevitable conditions of their respective situations, are precluded. A state

which should combine the advantages of both would be subjected to the evils of neither. He that is deficient in firm health, or vigorous intellect, is but half a man: hence it follows that to subject the labouring classes to unnecessary labour is wantonly depriving them of any opportunities of intellectual improvement; and that the rich are heaping up for their own mischief the disease, lassitude, and ennui by which their existence is rendered an intolerable burthen.

English reformers exclaim against sinecures, — but the true pension list is the rent-roll of the landed proprietors: wealth is a power usurped by the few, to compel the many to labour for their benefit. The laws which support this system derive their force from the ignorance and credulity of its victims: they are the result of a conspiracy of the few against the many, who are themselves obliged to purchase this pre-eminence by the loss of all real comfort.

‘The commodities that substantially contribute to the subsistence of the human species form a very short catalogue: they demand from us but a slender portion of industry. If these only were produced, and sufficiently produced, the species of man would be continued. If the labour necessarily required to produce them were equitably divided among the poor, and, still more, if it were equitably divided among all, each man’s share of labour would be light, and his portion of leisure would be ample. There was a time when this leisure would have been of small comparative value: it is to be hoped that the time will come when it will be applied to the most important purposes. Those hours which are not required for the production of the necessaries of life may be devoted to the cultivation of the understanding, the enlarging our stock of knowledge, the refining our taste, and thus opening to us new and more exquisite sources of enjoyment.

…

‘It was perhaps necessary that a period of monopoly and oppression should subsist, before a period of cultivated equality could subsist. Savages perhaps would never have been excited to the discovery of truth and the invention of art but by the narrow motives which such a period affords. But surely, after the savage state has ceased, and men have set out in the glorious career of discovery and invention, monopoly and oppression

cannot be necessary to prevent them from returning to a state of barbarism.’ — Godwin’s “Enquirer”, Essay 2. See also “Pol. Jus.”, book 8, chapter 2.

It is a calculation of this admirable author, that all the conveniences of civilized life might be produced, if society would divide the labour equally among its members, by each individual being employed in labour two hours during the day.

5. 112, 113: —

or religion Drives his wife raving mad.

I am acquainted with a lady of considerable accomplishments, and the mother of a numerous family, whom the Christian religion has goaded to incurable insanity. A parallel case is, I believe, within the experience of every physician.

Nam iam saepe homines patriam, carosquo parentes
Prodiderunt, vitare Acherusia templa petentes. — Lucretius.

5. 189: —

Even love is sold.

Not even the intercourse of the sexes is exempt from the despotism of positive institution. Law pretends even to govern the indisciplinable wanderings of passion, to put fetters on the clearest deductions of reason, and, by appeals to the will, to subdue the involuntary affections of our nature. Love is inevitably consequent upon the perception of loveliness. Love withers under constraint: its very essence is liberty: it is compatible neither with obedience, jealousy, nor fear: it is there most pure, perfect, and unlimited, where its votaries live in confidence, equality, and unreserve.

How long then ought the sexual connection to last? what law ought to specify the extent of the grievances which should limit its duration? A husband and wife ought to continue so long united as they love each other: any law which should bind them to cohabitation for one moment after the decay of their affection would be a most intolerable tyranny, and the most

unworthy of toleration. How odious an usurpation of the right of private judgement should that law be considered which should make the ties of friendship indissoluble, in spite of the caprices, the inconstancy, the fallibility, and capacity for improvement of the human mind. And by so much would the fetters of love be heavier and more unendurable than those of friendship, as love is more vehement and capricious, more dependent on those delicate peculiarities of imagination, and less capable of reduction to the ostensible merits of the object.

The state of society in which we exist is a mixture of feudal savageness and imperfect civilization. The narrow and unenlightened morality of the Christian religion is an aggravation of these evils. It is not even until lately that mankind have admitted that happiness is the sole end of the science of ethics, as of all other sciences; and that the fanatical idea of mortifying the flesh for the love of God has been discarded. I have heard, indeed, an ignorant collegian adduce, in favour of Christianity, its hostility to every worldly feeling! (The first Christian emperor made a law by which seduction was punished with death; if the female pleaded her own consent, she also was punished with death; if the parents endeavoured to screen the criminals, they were banished and their estates were confiscated; the slaves who might be accessory were burned alive, or forced to swallow melted lead. The very offspring of an illegal love were involved in the consequences of the sentence. — Gibbon's "Decline and Fall", etc., volume 2, page 210. See also, for the hatred of the primitive Christians to love and even marriage, page 269.)

But if happiness be the object of morality, of all human unions and disunions; if the worthiness of every action is to be estimated by the quantity of pleasurable sensation it is calculated to produce, then the connection of the sexes is so long sacred as it contributes to the comfort of the parties, and is naturally dissolved when its evils are greater than its benefits. There is nothing immoral in this separation. Constancy has nothing virtuous in itself, independently of the pleasure it confers, and partakes of the temporizing spirit of vice in proportion as it endures tamely moral defects of magnitude in the object of its indiscreet choice. Love is free: to promise for ever to love the same woman is not less absurd than to promise to believe the same creed: such a vow, in both cases, excludes us from all

inquiry. The language of the votarist is this: The woman I now love may be infinitely inferior to many others; the creed I now profess may be a mass of errors and absurdities; but I exclude myself from all future information as to the amiability of the one and the truth of the other, resolving blindly, and in spite of conviction, to adhere to them. Is this the language of delicacy and reason? Is the love of such a frigid heart of more worth than its belief?

The present system of constraint does no more, in the majority of instances, than make hypocrites or open enemies. Persons of delicacy and virtue, unhappily united to one whom they find it impossible to love, spend the loveliest season of their life in unproductive efforts to appear otherwise than they are, for the sake of the feelings of their partner or the welfare of their mutual offspring: those of less generosity and refinement openly avow their disappointment, and linger out the remnant of that union, which only death can dissolve, in a state of incurable bickering and hostility. The early education of their children takes its colour from the squabbles of the parents; they are nursed in a systematic school of ill-humour, violence, and falsehood. Had they been suffered to part at the moment when indifference rendered their union irksome, they would have been spared many years of misery: they would have connected themselves more suitably, and would have found that happiness in the society of more congenial partners which is for ever denied them by the despotism of marriage. They would have been separately useful and happy members of society, who, whilst united, were miserable and rendered misanthropical by misery. The conviction that wedlock is indissoluble holds out the strongest of all temptations to the perverse: they indulge without restraint in acrimony, and all the little tyrannies of domestic life, when they know that their victim is without appeal. If this connection were put on a rational basis, each would be assured that habitual ill-temper would terminate in separation, and would check this vicious and dangerous propensity.

Prostitution is the legitimate offspring of marriage and its accompanying errors. Women, for no other crime than having followed the dictates of a natural appetite, are driven with fury from the comforts and sympathies of society. It is less venial than murder; and the punishment which is inflicted on her who destroys her child to escape reproach is lighter than the life of agony and disease to which the prostitute is irrecoverably doomed. Has a

woman obeyed the impulse of unerring nature; — society declares war against her, pitiless and eternal war: she must be the tame slave, she must make no reprisals; theirs is the right of persecution, hers the duty of endurance. She lives a life of infamy: the loud and bitter laugh of scorn scares her from all return. She dies of long and lingering disease: yet SHE is in fault, SHE is the criminal, SHE the froward and untamable child, — and society, forsooth, the pure and virtuous matron, who casts her as an abortion from her undefiled bosom! Society avenges herself on the criminals of her own creation; she is employed in anathematizing the vice to-day, which yesterday she was the most zealous to teach. Thus is formed one-tenth of the population of London: meanwhile the evil is twofold. Young men, excluded by the fanatical idea of chastity from the society of modest and accomplished women, associate with these vicious and miserable beings, destroying thereby all those exquisite and delicate sensibilities whose existence cold-hearted worldlings have denied; annihilating all genuine passion, and debasing that to a selfish feeling which is the excess of generosity and devotedness. Their body and mind alike crumble into a hideous wreck of humanity; idiocy and disease become perpetuated in their miserable offspring, and distant generations suffer for the bigoted morality of their forefathers. Chastity is a monkish and evangelical superstition, a greater foe to natural temperance even than unintellectual sensuality; it strikes at the root of all domestic happiness, and consigns more than half of the human race to misery, that some few may monopolize according to law. A system could not well have been devised more studiously hostile to human happiness than marriage.

I conceive that from the abolition of marriage, the fit and natural arrangement of sexual connection would result. I by no means assert that the intercourse would be promiscuous: on the contrary, it appears, from the relation of parent to child, that this union is generally of long duration, and marked above all others with generosity and self-devotion. But this is a subject which it is perhaps premature to discuss. That which will result from the abolition of marriage will be natural and right; because choice and change will be exempted from restraint.

In fact, religion and morality, as they now stand, compose a practical code of misery and servitude: the genius of human happiness must tear every leaf

from the accursed book of God ere man can read the inscription on his heart. How would morality, dressed up in stiff stays and finery, start from her own disgusting image should she look in the mirror of nature! —

6. 45, 46: —

To the red and baleful sun
That faintly twinkles there.

The north polar star, to which the axis of the earth, in its present state of obliquity, points. It is exceedingly probable, from many considerations, that this obliquity will gradually diminish, until the equator coincides with the ecliptic: the nights and days will then become equal on the earth throughout the year, and probably the seasons also. There is no great extravagance in presuming that the progress of the perpendicularity of the poles may be as rapid as the progress of intellect; or that there should be a perfect identity between the moral and physical improvement of the human species. It is certain that wisdom is not compatible with disease, and that, in the present state of the climates of the earth, health, in the true and comprehensive sense of the word, is out of the reach of civilized man. Astronomy teaches us that the earth is now in its progress, and that the poles are every year becoming more and more perpendicular to the ecliptic. The strong evidence afforded by the history of mythology, and geological researches, that some event of this nature has taken place already, affords a strong presumption that this progress is not merely an oscillation, as has been surmised by some late astronomers. (Laplace, “Systeme du Monde”.)

Bones of animals peculiar to the torrid zone have been found in the north of Siberia, and on the banks of the river Ohio. Plants have been found in the fossil state in the interior of Germany, which demand the present climate of Hindostan for their production. (Cabanis, “Rapports du Physique et du Moral de l’Homme”, volume 2 page 406.) The researches of M. Bailly establish the existence of a people who inhabited a tract in Tartary 49 degrees north latitude, of greater antiquity than either the Indians, the Chinese, or the Chaldeans, from whom these nations derived their sciences and theology. (Bailly, “Lettres sur les Sciences, a Voltaire”.) We find, from the testimony of ancient writers, that Britain, Germany, and France were much colder than at present, and that their great rivers were annually frozen

over. Astronomy teaches us also that since this period the obliquity of the earth's position has been considerably diminished.

6. 171-173: —

No atom of this turbulence fulfils
A vague and unnecessitated task,
Or acts but as it must and ought to act.

'Deux examples serviront a nous rendre plus sensible le principe qui vient d'etre pose; nous emprunterons l'un du physique at l'autre du moral. Dans un tourbillon de poussiere qu'eleve un vent impetueux, quelque confus qu'il paraisse a nos yeux; dans la plus affreuse tempete excitee par des vents opposes qui soulevent les flots, — il n'y a pas une seule molecule de poussiere ou d'eau qui soit placee au HASARD, qui n'ait sa cause suffisante pour occuper le lieu ou elle se trouve, et qui n'agisse rigoureusement de la maniere dont ella doit agir. Un geometre qui connaitrait exactement les differentes forces qui agissent dans ces deux cas, at las proprietes des molecules qui sent mues, demontrerait que d'apres des causes donnees, chaque molecule agit precisement comme ella doit agir, et ne peut agir autrement qu'elle ne fait.

'Dans les convulsions terribles qui agitent quelquefois les societes politiques, et qui produisent souvent le renversement d'un empire, il n'y a pas une seule action, une seule parole, une seule pensee, une seule volonte, une seule passion dans las agens qui concourent a la revolution comme destructeurs ou comme victimes, qui ne soit necessaire, qui n'agissa comme ella doit agir, qui n'opere infailliblemont les effets qu'eile doit operer, suivant la place qu'occupent ces agens dana ce tourbillon moral. Cela paraitrait evident pour une intelligence qui sera en etat de saisir et d'apprecier toutes las actions at reactions des esprits at des corps de ceux qui contribuent a cette revolution.'—"Systeme de la Nature", volume 1, page 44.

6. 198: —

Necessity! thou mother of the world!

He who asserts the doctrine of Necessity means that, contemplating the events which compose the moral and material universe, he beholds only an immense and uninterrupted chain of causes and effects, no one of which could occupy any other place than it does occupy, or act in any other place than it does act. The idea of necessity is obtained by our experience of the connection between objects, the uniformity of the operations of nature, the constant conjunction of similar events, and the consequent inference of one from the other. Mankind are therefore agreed in the admission of necessity, if they admit that these two circumstances take place in voluntary action. Motive is to voluntary action in the human mind what cause is to effect in the material universe. The word liberty, as applied to mind, is analogous to the word chance as applied to matter: they spring from an ignorance of the certainty of the conjunction of antecedents and consequents.

Every human being is irresistibly impelled to act precisely as he does act: in the eternity which preceded his birth a chain of causes was generated, which, operating under the name of motives, make it impossible that any thought of his mind, or any action of his life, should be otherwise than it is. Were the doctrine of Necessity false, the human mind would no longer be a legitimate object of science; from like causes it would be in vain that we should expect like effects; the strongest motive would no longer be paramount over the conduct; all knowledge would be vague and undeterminate; we could not predict with any certainty that we might not meet as an enemy to-morrow him with whom we have parted in friendship to-night; the most probable inducements and the clearest reasonings would lose the invariable influence they possess. The contrary of this is demonstrably the fact. Similar circumstances produce the same unvariable effects. The precise character and motives of any man on any occasion being given, the moral philosopher could predict his actions with as much certainty as the natural philosopher could predict the effects of the mixture of any particular chemical substances. Why is the aged husbandman more experienced than the young beginner? Because there is a uniform, undeniable necessity in the operations of the material universe. Why is the old statesman more skilful than the raw politician) Because, relying on the necessary conjunction of motive and action, he proceeds to produce moral effects, by the application of those moral causes which experience has shown to be effectual. Some actions may be found to which we can attach

no motives, but these are the effects of causes with which we are unacquainted. Hence the relation which motive bears to voluntary action is that of cause to effect; nor, placed in this point of view, is it, or ever has it been, the subject of popular or philosophical dispute. None but the few fanatics who are engaged in the herculean task of reconciling the justice of their God with the misery of man, will longer outrage common sense by the supposition of an event without a cause, a voluntary action without a motive. History, politics, morals, criticism, all grounds of reasonings, all principles of science, alike assume the truth of the doctrine of Necessity. No farmer carrying his corn to market doubts the sale of it at the market price. The master of a manufactory no more doubts that he can purchase the human labour necessary for his purposes than that his machinery will act as they have been accustomed to act.

But, whilst none have scrupled to admit necessity as influencing matter, many have disputed its dominion over mind. Independently of its militating with the received ideas of the justice of God, it is by no means obvious to a superficial inquiry. When the mind observes its own operations, it feels no connection of motive and action: but as we know ‘nothing more of causation than the constant conjunction of objects and the consequent inference of one from the other, as we find that these two circumstances are universally allowed to have place in voluntary action, we may be easily led to own that they are subjected to the necessity common to all causes.’ The actions of the will have a regular conjunction with circumstances and characters; motive is to voluntary action what cause is to effect. But the only idea we can form of causation is a constant conjunction of similar objects, and the consequent inference of one from the other: wherever this is the case necessity is clearly established.

The idea of liberty, applied metaphorically to the will, has sprung from a misconception of the meaning of the word power. What is power? — id quod potest, that which can produce any given effect. To deny power is to say that nothing can or has the power to be or act. In the only true sense of the word power, it applies with equal force to the lodestone as to the human will. Do you think these motives, which I shall present, are powerful enough to rouse him? is a question just as common as, Do you think this lever has the power of raising this weight? The advocates of free-will assert

that the will has the power of refusing to be determined by the strongest motive; but the strongest motive is that which, overcoming all others, ultimately prevails; this assertion therefore amounts to a denial of the will being ultimately determined by that motive which does determine it, which is absurd. But it is equally certain that a man cannot resist the strongest motive as that he cannot overcome a physical impossibility.

The doctrine of Necessity tends to introduce a great change into the established notions of morality, and utterly to destroy religion. Reward and punishment must be considered, by the Necessarian, merely as motives which he would employ in order to procure the adoption or abandonment of any given line of conduct. Desert, in the present sense of the word, would no longer have any meaning; and he who should inflict pain upon another for no better reason than that he deserved it, would only gratify his revenge under pretence of satisfying justice? It is not enough, says the advocate of free-will, that a criminal should be prevented from a repetition of his crime: he should feel pain, and his torments, when justly inflicted, ought precisely to be proportioned to his fault. But utility is morality; that which is incapable of producing happiness is useless; and though the crime of Damiens must be condemned, yet the frightful torments which revenge, under the name of justice, inflicted on this unhappy man cannot be supposed to have augmented, even at the long run, the stock of pleasurable sensation in the world. At the same time, the doctrine of Necessity does not in the least diminish our disapprobation of vice. The conviction which all feel that a viper is a poisonous animal, and that a tiger is constrained, by the inevitable condition of his existence, to devour men, does not induce us to avoid them lass sedulously, or, even more, to hesitate in destroying them: but he would surely be of a hard heart who, meeting with a serpent on a desert island, or in a situation where it was incapable of injury, should wantonly deprive it of existence. A Necessarian is inconsequent to his own principles if he indulges in hatred or contempt; the compassion which he feels for the criminal is unmixed with a desire of injuring him: he looks with an elevated and dreadless composure upon the links of the universal chain as they pass before his eyes; whilst cowardice, curiosity, and inconsistency only assail him in proportion to the feebleness and indistinctness with which he has perceived and rejected the delusions of free-will.

Religion is the perception of the relation in which we stand to the principle of the universe. But if the principle of the universe be not an organic being, the model and prototype of man, the relation between it and human beings is absolutely none. Without some insight into its will respecting our actions religion is nugatory and vain. But will is only a mode of animal mind; moral qualities also are such as only a human being can possess; to attribute them to the principle of the universe is to annex to it properties incompatible with any possible definition of its nature. It is probable that the word God was originally only an expression denoting the unknown cause of the known events which men perceived in the universe. By the vulgar mistake of a metaphor for a real being, of a word for a thing, it became a man, endowed with human qualities and governing the universe as an earthly monarch governs his kingdom. Their addresses to this imaginary being, indeed, are much in the same style as those of subjects to a king. They acknowledge his benevolence, deprecate his anger, and supplicate his favour.

But the doctrine of Necessity teaches us that in no case could any event have happened otherwise than it did happen, and that, if God is the author of good, He is also the author of evil; that, if He is entitled to our gratitude for the one, He is entitled to our hatred for the other; that, admitting the existence of this hypothetic being, He is also subjected to the dominion of an immutable necessity. It is plain that the same arguments which prove that God is the author of food, light, and life, prove Him also to be the author of poison, darkness, and death. The wide-wasting earthquake, the storm, the battle, and the tyranny, are attributable to this hypothetic being in the same degree as the fairest forms of nature, sunshine, liberty, and peace.

But we are taught, by the doctrine of Necessity, that there is neither good nor evil in the universe, otherwise than as the events to which we apply these epithets have relation to our own peculiar mode of being. Still less than with the hypothesis of a God will the doctrine of Necessity accord with the belief of a future state of punishment. God made man such as he is, and than damned him for being so: for to say that God was the author of all good, and man the author of all evil, is to say that one man made a straight line and a crooked one, and another man made the incongruity.

A Mahometan story, much to the present purpose, is recorded, wherein Adam and Moses are introduced disputing before God in the following manner. Thou, says Moses, art Adam, whom God created, and animated with the breath of life, and caused to be worshipped by the angels, and placed in Paradise, from whence mankind have been expelled for thy fault. Whereto Adam answered, Thou art Moses, whom God chose for His apostle, and entrusted with His word, by giving thee the tables of the law, and whom He vouchsafed to admit to discourse with Himself. How many years dost thou find the law was written before I was created? Says Moses, Forty. And dost thou not find, replied Adam, these words therein, And Adam rebelled against his Lord and transgressed? Which Moses confessing, Dost thou therefore blame me, continued he, for doing that which God wrote of me that I should do, forty years before I was created, nay, for what was decreed concerning me fifty thousand years before the creation of heaven and earth? — Sale's "Prelim. Disc. to the Koran", page 164.

7. 13: —

There is no God.

This negation must be understood solely to affect a creative Deity. The hypothesis of a pervading Spirit co-eternal with the universe remains unshaken.

A close examination of the validity of the proofs adduced to support any proposition is the only secure way of attaining truth, on the advantages of which it is unnecessary to descant: our knowledge of the existence of a Deity is a subject of such importance that it cannot be too minutely investigated; in consequence of this conviction we proceed briefly and impartially to examine the proofs which have been adduced. It is necessary first to consider the nature of belief.

When a proposition is offered to the mind, it perceives the agreement or disagreement of the ideas of which it is composed. A perception of their agreement is termed BELIEF. Many obstacles frequently prevent this perception from being immediate; these the mind attempts to remove in order that the perception may be distinct. The mind is active in the investigation in order to perfect the state of perception of the relation which

the component ideas of the proposition bear to each, which is passive: the investigation being confused with the perception has induced many falsely to imagine that the mind is active in belief, — that belief is an act of volition, — in consequence of which it may be regulated by the mind. Pursuing, continuing this mistake, they have attached a degree of criminality to disbelief; of which, in its nature, it is incapable: it is equally incapable of merit.

Belief, then, is a passion, the strength of which, like every other passion, is in precise proportion to the degrees of excitement.

The degrees of excitement are three.

The senses are the sources of all knowledge to the mind; consequently their evidence claims the strongest assent.

The decision of the mind, founded upon our own experience, derived from these sources, claims the next degree.

The experience of others, which addresses itself to the former one, occupies the lowest degree.

(A graduated scale, on which should be marked the capabilities of propositions to approach to the test of the senses, would be a just barometer of the belief which ought to be attached to them.)

Consequently no testimony can be admitted which is contrary to reason; reason is founded on the evidence of our senses.

Every proof may be referred to one of these three divisions: it is to be considered what arguments we receive from each of them, which should convince us of the existence of a Deity.

1st, The evidence of the senses. If the Deity should appear to us, if He should convince our senses of His existence, this revelation would necessarily command belief. Those to whom the Deity has thus appeared have the strongest possible conviction of His existence. But the God of Theologians is incapable of local visibility.

2d, Reason. It is urged that man knows that whatever is must either have had a beginning, or have existed from all eternity: he also knows that whatever is not eternal must have had a cause. When this reasoning is applied to the universe, it is necessary to prove that it was created: until that is clearly demonstrated we may reasonably suppose that it has endured from all eternity. We must prove design before we can infer a designer. The only idea which we can form of causation is derivable from the constant conjunction of objects, and the consequent inference of one from the other. In a case where two propositions are diametrically opposite, the mind believes that which is least incomprehensible; — it is easier to suppose that the universe has existed from all eternity than to conceive a being beyond its limits capable of creating it: if the mind sinks beneath the weight of one, is it an alleviation to increase the intolerability of the burthen?

The other argument, which is founded on a man's knowledge of his own existence, stands thus. A man knows not only that he now is, but that once he was not; consequently there must have been a cause. But our idea of causation is alone derivable from the constant conjunction of objects and the consequent inference of one from the other; and, reasoning experimentally, we can only infer from effects causes exactly adequate to those effects. But there certainly is a generative power which is effected by certain instruments: we cannot prove that it is inherent in these instruments; nor is the contrary hypothesis capable of demonstration: we admit that the generative power is incomprehensible; but to suppose that the same effect is produced by an eternal, omniscient, omnipotent being leaves the cause in the same obscurity, but renders it more incomprehensible.

3d, Testimony. It is required that testimony should not be contrary to reason. The testimony that the Deity convinces the senses of men of His existence can only be admitted by us if our mind considers it less probable that these men should have been deceived than that the Deity should have appeared to them. Our reason can never admit the testimony of men, who not only declare that they were eye-witnesses of miracles, but that the Deity was irrational; for He commanded that He should be believed, He proposed the highest rewards for faith, eternal punishments for disbelief. We can only command voluntary actions; belief is not an act of volition; the mind is even passive, or involuntarily active; from this it is evident that we have no

sufficient testimony, or rather that testimony is insufficient to prove the being of a God. It has been before shown that it cannot be deduced from reason. They alone, then, who have been convinced by the evidence of the senses can believe it.

Hence it is evident that, having no proofs from either of the three sources of conviction, the mind CANNOT believe the existence of a creative God: it is also evident that, as belief is a passion of the mind, no degree of criminality is attachable to disbelief; and that they only are reprehensible who neglect to remove the false medium through which their mind views any subject of discussion. Every reflecting mind must acknowledge that there is no proof of the existence of a Deity.

God is an hypothesis, and, as such, stands in need of proof: the onus probandi rests on the theist. Sir Isaac Newton says: Hypotheses non fingo, quicquid enim ex phaenomenis non deducitur hypothesis vocanda est, et hypothesis vel metaphysicae, vel physicae, vel qualitatum occultarum, seu mechanicae, in philosophia locum non habent. To all proofs of the existence of a creative God apply this valuable rule. We see a variety of bodies possessing a variety of powers: we merely know their effects; we are in a state of ignorance with respect to their essences and causes. These Newton calls the phenomena of things; but the pride of philosophy is unwilling to admit its ignorance of their causes. From the phenomena, which are the objects of our senses, we attempt to infer a cause, which we call God, and gratuitously endow it with all negative and contradictory qualities. From this hypothesis we invent this general name, to conceal our ignorance of causes and essences. The being called God by no means answers with the conditions prescribed by Newton; it bears every mark of a veil woven by philosophical conceit, to hide the ignorance of philosophers even from themselves. They borrow the threads of its texture from the anthropomorphism of the vulgar. Words have been used by sophists for the same purposes, from the occult qualities of the peripatetics to the effluvium of Boyle and the crinities or nebulae of Herschel. God is represented as infinite, eternal, incomprehensible; He is contained under every predicate in non that the logic of ignorance could fabricate. Even His worshippers allow that it is impossible to form any idea of Him: they exclaim with the French poet,

Pour dire ce qu'il est, il faut etre lui-meme.

Lord Bacon says that atheism leaves to man reason, philosophy, natural piety, laws, reputation, and everything that can serve to conduct him to virtue; but superstition destroys all these, and erects itself into a tyranny over the understandings of men: hence atheism never disturbs the government, but renders man more clear-sighted, since he seas nothing beyond the boundaries of the present life. — Bacon's "Moral Essays".

La premiere theologie de l'homme lui fit d'abord craindre at adorer les elements meme, des objets materiels at grossiers; il randit ensuite ses hommages a des agents presidant aux elements, a des genies inferieurs, a des heros, ou a des hommes doues de grandes qualites. A force de reflechir il crut simplifier les choses en soumettant la nature entiere a un seul agent, a un esprit, a una ame universelle, qui mettait cette nature et ses parties en mouvement. En remontant de causes en causes, les mortels ont fini par ne rien voir; at c'est dans cette obscurite qu'ils ont place leur Dieu; c'est dans cat abime tenebreux que leur imagination inquiete travaille toujours a se fabriquer des chimeres, qui les affligeront jusqu'a ce que la connaissance da la nature les detrompe des fantomes qu'ils ont toujours si vainement adores.

Si nous voulons nous rendre compte de nos idees sur la Divinite, nous serons obliges de convanir que, par le mot "Dieu", les hommes n'ont jamais pu designer que la cause la plus cachee, la plus eloignee, la plus inconnue des effets qu'ils voyaient: ils ne font usage de ce mot, que lorsque le jeu des causes naturelles at connues cesse d'etre visible pour eux; des qu'ils perdent le fil de ces causes, on des que leur esprit ne peut plus en suivre la chaine, ils tranchent leur difficulte, at terminent leurs recherches en appellant Dieu la derniere des causes, c'est-a-dire celle qui est au-dela de toutes les causes qu'ils connaissent; ainsi ils ne font qu'assigner une denomination vague a une cause ignoree, a laquelle leur paresse ou les bornes de leurs connaissances les forcent de s'arreter. Toutes les fois qu'on nous dit que Dieu est l'auteur de quelque phenomene, cela signifie qu'on ignore comment un tel phenomene a pu s'operer par le secours des forces ou des causes que nous connaissons dans la nature. C'est ainsi que le commun des hommes, dont l'ignorance est la partage, attribue a la Divinite non seulement les effets inusites qui las frappent, mais encore les evenemens les

plus simples, dont les causes sont les plus faciles a connaitre pour quiconque a pu les mediter. En un mot, l'homme a toujours respecte les causes inconnues des effets surprenans, que son ignorance l'empechait de demeler. Ce fut sur les debris de la nature que les hommes eleverent le colosse imaginaire de la Divinite.

Si l'ignorance de la nature donna la naissance aux dieux, la connaissance de la nature est faite pour les detruire. A mesure que l'homme s'instruit, ses forces at ses ressources augmentent avec ses lumieres; les sciences, les arts conservateurs, l'industrie, lui fournissent des secours; l'experience le rassure ou lui procure des moyens de resister aux efforts de bien des causes qui cessent de l'alarmer des qu'il les a connues. En un mot, ses terreurs se dissipent dans la meme proportion que son esprit s'eclaire. L'homnme instruit cesse d'etre superstitieux.

Ce n'est jamais que sur parole que des peuples entiers adorent le Dieu de leurs peres at de leurs pretres: l'autorite, la confiance, la soumission, et l'habitude leur tiennent lieu de conviction et de preuves; ils se prosternent et prient, parce que leurs peres leur out appris a se prosterner at prier: mais pourquoi ceux-ci se sont-ils mis a genoux? C'est que dans les temps eloignes leurs legislateurs et leurs guides leur en ont fait un devoir. 'Adorez at croyez,' ont-ils dit, 'des dieux que vous ne pouvez comprendre; rapportez-vous-en a notre sagesse profonde; nous en savons plus que vous sur la divinite.' Mais pourquoi m'en rapporterais-je a vous? C'est que Dieu le veut ainsi, c'est que Dieu vous punira si vous osez resister. Mais ce Dieu n'est-il donc pas la chose en question? Cependant las hommes se sont toujours payes de ce cercle vicieux; la paresse de leur esprit leur fit trouver plus court de s'en rapporter au jugament des autres. Toutes las notions religieuses sent fondees uniquement sur l'autorite; toutes les religions du monde defendent l'examen et ne veulent pas que l'on raisonne; c'est l'autorite qui veut qu'on croie en Dieu; ce Dieu n'est lui-meme fonde que sur l'autorite de quelques hommes qui pretendent le connaitre, et venir de sa part pour l'annoncer a la terre. Un Dieu fait par les hommes a sans doute bosom des hommes pour se faire connaitre aux hommes.

Ne serait-ce donc que pour des pretres, des inspires, des metaphysiciens que serait reservee la conviction de l'existence d'un Dieu, que l'on dit

neanmoins si necessaire a tout le genre humain? Mais trouvons-nous de l'harmonie entre les opinions theologiques des differens inspires, ou des penseurs repandus sur la terre? Ceux meme qui font profession d'adorer le meme Dieu, sent-ils d'accord sur son compte? Sont-ils contents des preuves que leurs collegues apportent de son existence? Souscrivent-ils unanimement aux idees qu'ils presentent sur sa nature, sur sa conduite, sur la facon d'entendre ses pretandus oracles? Est-il une centree sur la terre ou la science de Dieu se soit reellement parfectionnee? A-t-elle pris quelqne part la consistance et l'uniformite que nous voyons prendre aux connaissances humaines, aux arts les plus futiles, aux metiers les plus meprises? Ces mots d'esprit, d'immaterialite, de creation, de predestination, de grace; cette foule de distinctions subtiles dont la theologie s'est parteut remplie dans quelques pays, ces inventions si ingenieuses, imaginees par des penseurs qui se sont succedes depuis taut de siecles, n'ont fait, helas! qu'embrouiller les choses, et jamais la science la plus necassaire aux hommes n'a jusqu'ici pu acquerir la moindre fixite. Depuis des milliers d'annees ces reveurs oisifs se sont perpetuellement relayes pour mediter la Divinite, pour deviner ses voies cachees, pour inventer des hypotheses propres a developper cette enigme importante. Leur peu de succes n'a point decourage la vanite theologique; toujours on a parle de Dieu: on s'est egorge pour lui, et cet etre sublime demeure toujours le plus ignore et le plus discute.

Les hommes auraient ete trop heureux, si, se bornant aux objets visibles qui les interessent, ils eussent employe a perfectionner leurs sciences reelles, leurs lois, leur morale, leur education, la moitie des efforts qu'ils ont mis dans leurs recherches sur la Divinite. Ils auraiant ete bien plus sages encore, et plus fortunes, s'ils eussent pu consentir a laisser leurs guides desoeuvres se quereller entre eux, et sonder des profondeurs capables de les etourdir, sans se meler de leurs disputes insensees. Mais il est de l'essence de l'ignorance d'attacher de l'importance a ce qu'elle ne comprend pas. La vanite humaine fait que l'esprit se roidit contra des difficultes. Plus un objet se derobe a nos yeux, plus nous faisons d'efforts pour le saisir, parce que des-lors il aiguillonne notre orgueil, il excite notre curiosite, il nous parait interessant. En combattant pour son Dieu chacun ne combattit en effet que pour les interets de sa propra vanite, qui de toutes les passions produites par

la mal-organisation de la societe est la plus prompte a s'alarmer, et la plus propre a produire de tres grandes folies.

Si ecartant pour un moment les idees facheuses que la theologie nous donne d'un Dieu capriciaux, dont les decrets partiaux et despotiques decident du sort des humains, nous ne voulons fixer nos yeux que sur la bonte pretendue, que tous les hommes, meme en tramblant devant ce Dieu, s'accordent a lui donner; si nous lui supposons le projet qu'on lui prete de n'avoir travaille que pour sa propre gloire, d'exiger les hommages des etres intelligens; de ne chercher dans ses oeuvres que le bien-etre du genre humain: comment concilier ces vues et ces dispositions avec l'ignorance vraiment invincible dans laquelle ce Dieu, si glorieux et si bon, laisse la plupart des hommes sur son compte? Si Dieu veut etre connu, cheri, remercie, que ne se montre-t-il sous des traits favorables a tous ces etres intelligens dont il veut etre aime et adore? Pourquoi ne point se manifester a toute la terre dune facon non equivoque, bien plus capable de nous convaincre que ces revelations particulieres qui semblent accuser la Divinite d'une partialite facheuse pour quelques-unes de ses creatures? La tout-puissant n'auroit-il donc pas des moyens plus convainquans de se montrer aux hommas que ces metamorphoses ridicules, cas incarnations pretendues, qui nous sont attestees par des ecrivains si peu d'accord entre eux dans les recits qu'ils en font? Au lieu de tant de miracles, inventes pour prouver la mission divine de tant de legislateurs reveres par les differens peuples du monde, le souverain des esprits ne pouvait-il pas convaincre tout d'un coup l'esprit humain des choses qu'il a voulu lui faire connaitre? Au lieu de suspendre un soleil dans la voute du firmament; au lieu de repandre sans ordre les etoiles et les constellations qui remplissent l'espace, n'eut-il pas ete plus conforme aux vues d'un Dieu si jaloux de sa gloire et si bien-intentionne pour l'homme d'ecrire, d'une facon non sujette a dispute, son nom, ses attributs, ses volontes permanentes en caracteres ineffacables, et lisibles egalement pour tous les habitants de la terre? Personne alors n'aurait pu douter de l'existence d'un Dieu, de ses volontes claires, de ses intentions visibles. Sous les yeux de ce Dieu si terrible, personne n'aurait eu l'audace de violer ses ordonnances; nul mortel n'eut ose se mettre dans le cas d'attirer sa colere: enfin nul homme n'eut eu le front d'en imposer en son nom, ou d'interpreter ses volontes suivant ses propres fantaisies.

En effet, quand meme on admettrait l'existence du Dieu theologique et la realite des attributs si discordans qu'on lui donne, l'on n'en peut rien conclure, pour autoriser la conduite ou les cultes qu'on prescrit de lui rendre. La theologie est vraiment "le tonneau des Danaides". A force de qualites contradictoires et d'assartions hasardees, ella a, pour ainsi dire, tellement garrotte son Dieu qu'elle l'a mis dans l'impossibilite d'agir. S'il est infiniment bon, quelle raison aurions-nous de le craindre? S'il est infiniment sage, de quoi nous inquieter sur notre sort? S'il sait tout, pourquoi l'avertir de nos besoins, et le fatiguer de nos prieres? S'il est partout, pourquoi lui elever des temples? S'il est maitre de tout, pourquoi lui faire des sacrifices et des offrandes? S'il est juste, comment croire qu'il punisse des creatures qu'il a rempli de faiblesses? Si la grace fait tout en elles, quelle raison aurait-il de les recompenser? S'il est tout-puissant, comment l'offenser, comment lui resister? S'il est raisonnable, comment se mattrait-il en colere contre des aveugles, a qui il a laisse la liberte de deraisonner? S'il est immuable, de quel droit pretendrions-nous faire changer ses decrets? S'il est inconcevable, pourquoi nous en occuper? S'IL A PARLE, POURQUOI L'UNIVERS N'EST-IL PAS CONVAINCU? Si la connaissance d'un Dieu est la plus necessaire, pourquoi n'est-elle pas la plus evidente et a plus claire?—"Systeme de la Nature", London, 1781.

The enlightened and benevolent Pliny thus publicly professes himself an atheist: — Quapropter effigiem Dei formamque quaerere imbecillitatis humanae reor. Quisquis est Deus (si modo est alius) et quacunque in parte, totus est sensus, totus est visus, totus auditus, totus animae, totus animi, totus sui…Imperfectae vero in homine naturae praecipua solatia ne deum quidem posse omnia. Namque nec sibi potest mortem consciscere, si velit, quad homini dedit optimum in tantis vitae poenis: nec mortales aeternitata donare, aut revocare defunctos; nec facere ut qui vixit non vixerit, qui honores gessit non gessarit, nullumque habere in praeteritum ius, praeterquam oblivionis, atque (ut facetis quoque argumentis societas haec cum deo copuletur) ut bis dena viginti non sint, et multa similiter efficere non posse. — Per quae declaratur haud dubie naturae potentiam id quoque esse quad Deum vocamus. — Plin. "Nat. Hist." cap. de Deo.

The consistent Newtonian is necessarily an atheist. See Sir W. Drummond's "Academical Questions", chapter 3. — Sir W. seems to consider the atheism

to which it leads as a sufficient presumption of the falsehood of the system of gravitation; but surely it is more consistent with the good faith of philosophy to admit a deduction from facts than an hypothesis incapable of proof, although it might militate with the obstinate preconceptions of the mob. Had this author, instead of inveighing against the guilt and absurdity of atheism, demonstrated its falsehood, his conduct would have been more suited to the modesty of the sceptic and the toleration of the philosopher.

Omnia enim per Dei potentiam facta sunt: imo quia naturae potentia nulla est nisi ipsa Dei potentia. Certum est nos eatenus Dei potentiam non intelligere, quatenus causas naturales ignoramus; adeoque stulte ad eandem Dei potentiam recurritur, quando rei alicuius causam naturalem, sive est, ipsam Dei potantiam ignoramus. — Spinosa, "Tract. Theologico-Pol." chapter 1, page 14.

7. 67: —

Ahasuerus, rise!

'Ahasuerus the Jew crept forth from the dark cave of Mount Carmel. Near two thousand years have elapsed since he was first goaded by never-ending restlessness to rove the globe from pole to pole. When our Lord was wearied with the burthen of His ponderous cross, and wanted to rest before the door of Ahasuerus, the unfeeling wretch drove Him away with brutality. The Saviour of mankind staggered, sinking under the heavy load, but uttered no complaint. An angel of death appeared before Ahasuerus, and exclaimed indignantly, "Barbarian! thou hast denied rest to the Son of man: be it denied thee also, until He comes to judge the world."

'A black demon, let loose from hell upon Ahasuerus, goads him now from country to country; he is denied the consolation which death affords, and precluded from the rest of the peaceful grave.

'Ahasuerus crept forth from the dark cave of Mount Carmel — he shook the dust from his beard — and taking up one of the skulls heaped there, hurled it down the eminence: it rebounded from the earth in shivered atoms. "This was my father!" roared Ahasuerus. Seven more skulls rolled down from rock to rock; while the infuriate Jew, following them with ghastly looks,

exclaimed—”And these were my wives!” He still continued to hurl down skull after skull, roaring in dreadful accents—”And these, and these, and these were my children! They COULD DIE; but I! reprobate wretch! alas! I cannot die! Dreadful beyond conception is the judgement that hangs over me. Jerusalem fell — I crushed the sucking babe, and precipitated myself into the destructive flames. I cursed the Romans — but, alas! alas! the restless curse held me by the hair, — and I could not die!

‘“Rome the giantess fell — I placed myself before the falling statue — she fell and did not crush me. Nations sprang up and disappeared before me; — but I remained and did not die. From cloud-encircled cliffs did I precipitate myself into the ocean; but the foaming billows cast me upon the shore, and the burning arrow of existence pierced my cold heart again. I leaped into Etna’s flaming abyss, and roared with the giants for ten long months, polluting with my groans the Mount’s sulphureous mouth — ah! ten long months. The volcano fermented, and in a fiery stream of lava cast me up. I lay torn by the torture-snakes of hell amid the glowing cinders, and yet continued to exist. — A forest was on fire: I darted on wings of fury and despair into the crackling wood. Fire dropped upon me from the trees, but the flames only singed my limbs; alas! it could not consume them. — I now mixed with the butchers of mankind, and plunged in the tempest of the raging battle. I roared defiance to the infuriate Gaul, defiance to the victorious German; but arrows and spears rebounded in shivers from my body. The Saracen’s flaming sword broke upon my skull: balls in vain hissed upon me: the lightnings of battle glared harmless around my loins: in vain did the elephant trample on me, in vain the iron hoof of the wrathful steed! The mine, big with destructive power, burst upon me, and hurled me high in the air — I fell on heaps of smoking limbs, but was only singed. The giant’s steel club rebounded from my body; the executioner’s hand could not strangle me, the tiger’s tooth could not pierce me, nor would the hungry lion in the circus devour me. I cohabited with poisonous snakes, and pinched the red crest of the dragon. — The serpent stung, but could not destroy me. The dragon tormented, but dared not to devour me. — I now provoked the fury of tyrants: I said to Nero, ‘Thou art a bloodhound!’ I said to Christiern, ‘Thou art a bloodhound!, I said to Muley Ismail, ‘Thou art a bloodhound!’ — The tyrants invented cruel torments, but did not kill me. Ha! not to be able to die — not to be able to die — not to be permitted to

rest after the toils of life — to be doomed to be imprisoned for ever in the clay-formed dungeon — to be for ever clogged with this worthless body, its lead of diseases and infirmities — to be condemned to *(be)*hold for millenniums that yawning monster Sameness, and Time, that hungry hyaena, ever bearing children, and ever devouring again her offspring! — Ha! not to be permitted to die! Awful Avenger in Heaven, hast Thou in Thine armoury of wrath a punishment more dreadful? then let it thunder upon me, command a hurricane to sweep me down to the foot of Carmel, that I there may lie extended; may pant, and writhe, and die.!"'

This fragment is the translation of part of some German work, whose title I have vainly endeavoured to discover. I picked it up, dirty and torn, some years ago, in Lincoln's-Inn Fields.

7. 135, 136: —

I will beget a Son, and He shall bear
The sins of all the world.

A book is put into our hands when children, called the Bible, the purport of whose history is briefly this: That God made the earth in six days, and there planted a delightful garden, in which He placed the first pair of human beings. In the midst of the garden He planted a tree, whose fruit, although within their reach, they were forbidden to touch. That the Devil, in the shape of a snake, persuaded them to eat of this fruit; in consequence of which God condemned both them and their posterity yet unborn to satisfy His justice by their eternal misery. That, four thousand years after these events (the human race in the meanwhile having gone unredeemed to perdition), God engendered with the betrothed wife of a carpenter in Judea (whose virginity was nevertheless uninjured), and begat a son, whose name was Jesus Christ; and who was crucified and died, in order that no more men might be devoted to hell-fire, He bearing the burthen of His Father's displeasure by proxy. The book states, in addition, that the soul of whoever disbelieves this sacrifice will be burned with everlasting fire.

During many ages of misery and darkness this story gained implicit belief; but at length men arose who suspected that it was a fable and imposture, and that Jesus Christ, so far from being a God, was only a man like

themselves. But a numerous set of men, who derived and still derive immense emoluments from this opinion, in the shape of a popular belief, told the vulgar that if they did not believe in the Bible they would be damned to all eternity; and burned, imprisoned, and poisoned all the unbiassed and unconnected inquirers who occasionally arose. They still oppress them, so far as the people, now become more enlightened, will allow.

The belief in all that the Bible contains is called Christianity. A Roman governor of Judea, at the instance of a priest-led mob, crucified a man called Jesus eighteen centuries ago. He was a man of pure life, who desired to rescue his countrymen from the tyranny of their barbarous and degrading superstitions. The common fate of all who desire to benefit mankind awaited him. The rabble, at the instigation of the priests, demanded his death, although his very judge made public acknowledgement of his innocence. Jesus was sacrificed to the honour of that God with whom he was afterwards confounded. It is of importance, therefore, to distinguish between the pretended character of this being as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, and his real character as a man, who, for a vain attempt to reform the world, paid the forfeit of his life to that overbearing tyranny which has since so long desolated the universe in his name. Whilst the one is a hypocritical Daemon, who announces Himself as the God of compassion and peace, even whilst He stretches forth His blood-red hand with the sword of discord to waste the earth, having confessedly devised this scheme of desolation from eternity; the other stands in the foremost list of those true heroes who have died in the glorious martyrdom of liberty, and have braved torture, contempt, and poverty in the cause of suffering humanity. (Since writing this note I have some reason to suspect that Jesus was an ambitious man, who aspired to the throne of Judea.

The vulgar, ever in extremes, became persuaded that the crucifixion of Jesus was a supernatural event. Testimonies of miracles, so frequent in unenlightened ages, were not wanting to prove that he was something divine. This belief, rolling through the lapse of ages, met with the reveries of Plato and the reasonings of Aristotle, and acquired force and extent, until the divinity of Jesus became a dogma, which to dispute was death, which to doubt was infamy.

CHRISTIANITY is now the established religion: he who attempts to impugn it must be contented to behold murderers and traitors take precedence of him in public opinion; though, if his genius be equal to his courage, and assisted by a peculiar coalition of circumstances, future ages may exalt him to a divinity, and persecute others in his name, as he was persecuted in the name of his predecessor in the homage of the world.

The same means that have supported every other popular belief have supported Christianity. War, imprisonment, assassination, and falsehood; deeds of unexampled and incomparable atrocity have made it what it is. The blood shed by the votaries of the God of mercy and peace, since the establishment of His religion, would probably suffice to drown all other sectaries now on the habitable globe. We derive from our ancestors a faith thus fostered and supported: we quarrel, persecute, and hate for its maintenance. Even under a government which, whilst it infringes the very right of thought and speech, boasts of permitting the liberty of the press, a man is pilloried and imprisoned because he is a deist, and no one raises his voice in the indignation of outraged humanity. But it is ever a proof that the falsehood of a proposition is felt by those who use coercion, not reasoning, to procure its admission; and a dispassionate observer would feel himself more powerfully interested in favour of a man who, depending on the truth of his opinions, simply stated his reasons for entertaining them, than in that of his aggressor who, daringly avowing his unwillingness or incapacity to answer them by argument, proceeded to repress the energies and break the spirit of their promulgator by that torture and imprisonment whose infliction he could command.

Analogy seems to favour the opinion that as, like other systems, Christianity has arisen and augmented, so like them it will decay and perish; that as violence, darkness, and deceit, not reasoning and persuasion, have procured its admission among mankind, so, when enthusiasm has subsided, and time, that infallible controverter of false opinions, has involved its pretended evidences in the darkness of antiquity, it will become obsolete; that Milton’s poem alone will give permanency to the remembrance of its absurdities; and that men will laugh as heartily at grace, faith, redemption, and original sin, as they now do at the metamorphoses of Jupiter, the

miracles of Romish saints, the efficacy of witchcraft, and the appearance of departed spirits.

Had the Christian religion commenced and continued by the mere force of reasoning and persuasion, the preceding analogy would be inadmissible. We should never speculate on the future obsoleteness of a system perfectly conformable to nature and reason: it would endure so long as they endured; it would be a truth as indisputable as the light of the sun, the criminality of murder, and other facts, whose evidence, depending on our organization and relative situations, must remain acknowledged as satisfactory so long as man is man. It is an incontrovertible fact, the consideration of which ought to repress the hasty conclusions of credulity, or moderate its obstinacy in maintaining them, that, had the Jews not been a fanatical race of men, had even the resolution of Pontius Pilate been equal to his candour, the Christian religion never could have prevailed, it could not even have existed: on so feeble a thread hangs the most cherished opinion of a sixth of the human race! When will the vulgar learn humility? When will the pride of ignorance blush at having believed before it could comprehend?

Either the Christian religion is true, or it is false: if true, it comes from God, and its authenticity can admit of doubt and dispute no further than its omnipotent author is willing to allow. Either the power or the goodness of God is called in question, if He leaves those doctrines most essential to the well-being of man in doubt and dispute; the only ones which, since their promulgation, have been the subject of unceasing cavil, the cause of irreconcilable hatred. IF GOD HAS SPOKEN, WHY IS THE UNIVERSE NOT CONVINCED?

There is this passage in the Christian Scriptures: ‘Those who obey not God, and believe not the Gospel of his Son, shall be punished with everlasting destruction.’ This is the pivot upon which all religions turn: — they all assume that it is in our power to believe or not to believe; whereas the mind can only believe that which it thinks true. A human being can only be supposed accountable for those actions which are influenced by his will. But belief is utterly distinct from and unconnected with volition: it is the apprehension of the agreement or disagreement of the ideas that compose any preposition. Belief is a passion, or involuntary operation of the mind,

and, like other passions, its intensity is precisely proportionate to the degrees of excitement. Volition is essential to merit or demerit. But the Christian religion attaches the highest possible degrees of merit and demerit to that which is worthy of neither, and which is totally unconnected with the peculiar faculty of the mind, whose presence is essential to their being.

Christianity was intended to reform the world: had an all-wise Being planned it, nothing is more improbable than that it should have failed: omniscience would infallibly have foreseen the inutility of a scheme which experience demonstrates, to this age, to have been utterly unsuccessful.

Christianity inculcates the necessity of supplicating the Deity. Prayer may be considered under two points of view; — as an endeavour to change the intentions of God, or as a formal testimony of our obedience. But the former case supposes that the caprices of a limited intelligence can occasionally instruct the Creator of the world how to regulate the universe; and the latter, a certain degree of servility analogous to the loyalty demanded by earthly tyrants. Obedience indeed is only the pitiful and cowardly egotism of him who thinks that he can do something better than reason.

Christianity, like all other religions, rests upon miracles, prophecies, and martyrdoms. No religion ever existed which had not its prophets, its attested miracles, and, above all, crowds of devotees who would bear patiently the most horrible tortures to prove its authenticity. It should appear that in no case can a discriminating mind subscribe to the genuineness of a miracle. A miracle is an infraction of nature's law, by a supernatural cause; by a cause acting beyond that eternal circle within which all things are included. God breaks through the law of nature, that He may convince mankind of the truth of that revelation which, in spite of His precautions, has been, since its introduction, the subject of unceasing schism and cavil.

Miracles resolve themselves into the following question (See Hume's Essay, volume 2 page 121.): — Whether it is more probable the laws of nature, hitherto so immutably harmonious, should have undergone violation, or that a man should have told a lie? Whether it is more probable that we are ignorant of the natural cause of an event, or that we know the supernatural one? That, in old times, when the powers of nature were less

known than at present, a certain set of men were themselves deceived, or had some hidden motive for deceiving others; or that God begat a Son, who, in His legislation, measuring merit by belief, evidenced Himself to be totally ignorant of the powers of the human mind — of what is voluntary, and what is the contrary?

We have many instances of men telling lies; — none of an infraction of nature's laws, those laws of whose government alone we have any knowledge or experience. The records of all nations afford innumerable instances of men deceiving others either from vanity or interest, or themselves being deceived by the limitedness of their views and their ignorance of natural causes: but where is the accredited case of God having come upon earth, to give the lie to His own creations? There would be something truly wonderful in the appearance of a ghost; but the assertion of a child that he saw one as he passed through the churchyard is universally admitted to be less miraculous.

But even supposing that a man should raise a dead body to life before our eyes, and on this fact rest his claim to being considered the son of God; — the Humane Society restores drowned persons, and because it makes no mystery of the method it employs, its members are not mistaken for the sons of God. All that we have a right to infer from our ignorance of the cause of any event is that we do not know it: had the Mexicans attended to this simple rule when they heard the cannon of the Spaniards, they would not have considered them as gods: the experiments of modern chemistry would have defied the wisest philosophers of ancient Greece and Rome to have accounted for them on natural principles. An author of strong common sense has observed that 'a miracle is no miracle at second-hand'; he might have added that a miracle is no miracle in any case; for until we are acquainted with all natural causes, we have no reason to imagine others.

There remains to be considered another proof of Christianity — Prophecy. A book is written before a certain event, in which this event is foretold; how could the prophet have foreknown it without inspiration? how could he have been inspired without God? The greatest stress is laid on the prophecies of Moses and Hosea on the dispersion of the Jews, and that of Isaiah concerning the coming of the Messiah. The prophecy of Moses is a

collection of every possible cursing and blessing; and it is so far from being marvellous that the one of dispersion should have been fulfilled, that it would have been more surprising if, out of all these, none should have taken effect. In Deuteronomy, chapter 28, verse 64, where Moses explicitly foretells the dispersion, he states that they shall there serve gods of wood and stone: 'And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even to the other; AND THERE THOU SHALT SERVE OTHER GODS, WHICH NEITHER THOU NOR THY FATHERS HAVE KNOWN, EVEN GODS OF WOOD AND STONE.' The Jews are at this day remarkably tenacious of their religion. Moses also declares that they shall be subjected to these curses for disobedience to his ritual: 'And it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all the commandments and statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee.' Is this the real reason? The third, fourth, and fifth chapters of Hosea are a piece of immodest confession. The indelicate type might apply in a hundred senses to a hundred things. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is more explicit, yet it does not exceed in clearness the oracles of Delphos. The historical proof that Moses, Isaiah, and Hosea did write when they are said to have written is far from being clear and circumstantial.

But prophecy requires proof in its character as a miracle; we have no right to suppose that a man foreknew future events from God, until it is demonstrated that he neither could know them by his own exertions, nor that the writings which contain the prediction could possibly have been fabricated after the event pretended to be foretold. It is more probable that writings, pretending to divine inspiration, should have been fabricated after the fulfilment of their pretended prediction than that they should have really been divinely inspired, when we consider that the latter supposition makes God at once the creator of the human mind and ignorant of its primary powers, particularly as we have numberless instances of false religions, and forged prophecies of things long past, and no accredited case of God having conversed with men directly or indirectly. It is also possible that the description of an event might have foregone its occurrence; but this is far from being a legitimate proof of a divine revelation, as many men, not pretending to the character of a prophet, have nevertheless, in this sense, prophesied.

Lord Chesterfield was never yet taken for a prophet, even by a bishop, yet he uttered this remarkable prediction: ‘The despotic government of France is screwed up to the highest pitch; a revolution is fast approaching; that revolution, I am convinced, will be radical and sanguinary.’ This appeared in the letters of the prophet long before the accomplishment of this wonderful prediction. Now, have these particulars come to pass, or have they not? If they have, how could the Earl have foreknown them without inspiration? If we admit the truth of the Christian religion on testimony such as this, we must admit, on the same strength of evidence, that God has affixed the highest rewards to belief, and the eternal tortures of the never-dying worm to disbelief, both of which have been demonstrated to be involuntary.

The last proof of the Christian religion depends on the influence of the Holy Ghost. Theologians divide the influence of the Holy Ghost into its ordinary and extraordinary modes of operation. The latter is supposed to be that which inspired the Prophets and Apostles; and the former to be the grace of God, which summarily makes known the truth of His revelation to those whose mind is fitted for its reception by a submissive perusal of His word. Persons convinced in this manner can do anything but account for their conviction, describe the time at which it happened, or the manner in which it came upon them. It is supposed to enter the mind by other channels than those of the senses, and therefore professes to be superior to reason founded on their experience.

Admitting, however, the usefulness or possibility of a divine revelation, unless we demolish the foundations of all human knowledge, it is requisite that our reason should previously demonstrate its genuineness; for, before we extinguish the steady ray of reason and common sense, it is fit that we should discover whether we cannot do without their assistance, whether or no there be any other which may suffice to guide us through the labyrinth of life (See Locke’s “Essay on the Human Understanding”, book 4 chapter 19, on Enthusiasm.): for, if a man is to be inspired upon all occasions, if he is to be sure of a thing because he is sure, if the ordinary operations of the Spirit are not to be considered very extraordinary modes of demonstration, if enthusiasm is to usurp the place of proof, and madness that of sanity, all reasoning is superfluous. The Mahometan dies fighting for his prophet, the

Indian immolates himself at the chariot-wheels of Brahma, the Hottentot worships an insect, the Negro a bunch of feathers, the Mexican sacrifices human victims! Their degree of conviction must certainly be very strong: it cannot arise from reasoning, it must from feelings, the reward of their prayers. If each of these should affirm, in opposition to the strongest possible arguments, that inspiration carried internal evidence, I fear their inspired brethren, the orthodox missionaries, would be so uncharitable as to pronounce them obstinate.

Miracles cannot be received as testimonies of a disputed fact, because all human testimony has ever been insufficient to establish the possibility of miracles. That which is incapable of proof itself is no proof of anything else. Prophecy has also been rejected by the test of reason. Those, then, who have been actually inspired are the only true believers in the Christian religion.

Mox numine viso
Virgineei tumuere sinus, innuptaque mater
Arcano stupuit compleri viscera partu,
Auctorem paritura suum. Mortalia corda
Artificem texere poli, latuitque sub uno
Pectore, qui totum late complectitur orbem. — Claudian, “Carmen Paschale”.

Does not so monstrous and disgusting an absurdity carry its own infamy and refutation with itself?

8. 203-207: —

Him, still from hope to hope the bliss pursuing
Which from the exhaustless lore of human weal
Draws on the virtuous mind, the thoughts that rise
In time-destroying infiniteness, gift
With self-enshrined eternity, etc.

Time is our consciousness of the succession of ideas in our mind. Vivid sensation, of either pain or pleasure, makes the time seem long, as the common phrase is, because it renders us more acutely conscious of our

ideas. If a mind be conscious of an hundred ideas during one minute, by the clock, and of two hundred during another, the latter of these spaces would actually occupy so much greater extent in the mind as two exceed one in quantity. If, therefore, the human mind, by any future improvement of its sensibility, should become conscious of an infinite number of ideas in a minute, that minute would be eternity. I do not hence infer that the actual space between the birth and death of a man will ever be prolonged; but that his sensibility is perfectible, and that the number of ideas which his mind is capable of receiving is indefinite. One man is stretched on the rack during twelve hours; another sleeps soundly in his bed: the difference of time perceived by these two persons is immense; one hardly will believe that half an hour has elapsed, the other could credit that centuries had flown during his agony. Thus, the life of a man of virtue and talent, who should die in his thirtieth year, is, with regard to his own feelings, longer than that of a miserable priest-ridden slave, who dreams out a century of dulness. The one has perpetually cultivated his mental faculties, has rendered himself master of his thoughts, can abstract and generalize amid the lethargy of every-day business; — the other can slumber over the brightest moments of his being, and is unable to remember the happiest hour of his life. Perhaps the perishing ephemeron enjoys a longer life than the tortoise.

Dark flood of time!
Roll as it listeth thee — I measure not
By months or moments thy ambiguous course.
Another may stand by me on the brink
And watch the bubble whirled beyond his ken
That pauses at my feet. The sense of love,
The thirst for action, and the impassioned thought
Prolong my being: if I wake no more,
My life more actual living will contain
Than some gray veteran's of the world's cold school,
Whose listless hours unprofitably roll,
By one enthusiast feeling unredeemed. —

See Godwin's "Pol. Jus." volume 1, page 411; and Condorcet, "Esquisse d'un Tableau Historique des Progres de l'Esprit Humain", epoque 9.

8. 211, 212: —

No longer now
He slays the lamb that looks him in the face.

I hold that the depravity of the physical and moral nature of man originated in his unnatural habits of life. The origin of man, like that of the universe of which he is a part, is enveloped in impenetrable mystery. His generations either had a beginning, or they had not. The weight of evidence in favour of each of these suppositions seems tolerably equal; and it is perfectly unimportant to the present argument which is assumed. The language spoken, however, by the mythology of nearly all religions seems to prove that at some distant period man forsook the path of nature, and sacrificed the purity and happiness of his being to unnatural appetites. The date of this event seems to have also been that of some great change in the climates of the earth, with which it has an obvious correspondence. The allegory of Adam and Eve eating of the tree of evil, and entailing upon their posterity the wrath of God and the loss of everlasting life, admits of no other explanation than the disease and crime that have flowed from unnatural diet. Milton was so well aware of this that he makes Raphael thus exhibit to Adam the consequence of his disobedience: —

Immediately a place
Before his eyes appeared, sad, noisome, dark;
A lazar-house it seemed; wherein were laid
Numbers of all diseased — all maladies
Of ghastly spasm, or racking torture, qualms
Of heart-sick agony, all feverous kinds,
Convulsions, epilepsies, fierce catarrhs,
Intestine stone and ulcer, colic pangs,
Demoniac frenzy, moping melancholy,
And moon-struck madness, pining atrophy,
Marasmus, and wide-wasting pestilence,
Dropsies and asthmas, and joint-racking rheums.

And how many thousands more might not be added to this frightful catalogue!

The story of Prometheus is one likewise which, although universally admitted to be allegorical, has never been satisfactorily explained. Prometheus stole fire from heaven, and was chained for this crime to Mount Caucasus, where a vulture continually devoured his liver, that grew to meet its hunger. Hesiod says that, before the time of Prometheus, mankind were exempt from suffering; that they enjoyed a vigorous youth, and that death, when at length it came, approached like sleep, and gently closed their eyes. Again, so general was this opinion that Horace, a poet of the Augustan age, writes: —

Audax omnia perpeti,
Gens humana ruit per vetitum nefas;
Audax Iapeti genus
Ignem fraude mala gentibus intulit:
Post ignem aetheria domo
Subductum, macies et nova febrium
Terris incubuit cohors,
Semotique prius tarda necessitas
Lethi corripuit gradum.

How plain a language is spoken by all this! Prometheus (who represents the human race) effected some great change in the condition of his nature, and applied fire to culinary purposes; thus inventing an expedient for screening from his disgust the horrors of the shambles. From this moment his vitals were devoured by the vulture of disease. It consumed his being in every shape of its loathsome and infinite variety, inducing the soul-quelling sinkings of premature and violent death. All vice rose from the ruin of healthful innocence. Tyranny, superstition, commerce, and inequality were then first known, when reason vainly attempted to guide the wanderings of exacerbated passion. I conclude this part of the subject with an extract from Mr. Newton's "Defence of Vegetable Regimen", from whom I have borrowed this interpretation of the fable of Prometheus.

'Making allowance for such transposition of the events of the allegory as time might produce after the important truths were forgotten, which this portion of the ancient mythology was intended to transmit, the drift of the fable seems to be this: — Man at his creation was endowed with the gift of

perpetual youth; that is, he was not formed to be a sickly suffering creature as we now see him, but to enjoy health, and to sink by slow degrees into the bosom of his parent earth without disease or pain. Prometheus first taught the use of animal food (primus bovem occidit Prometheus (Plin. "Nat. Hist". lib. 7 sect. 57.)) and of fire, with which to render it more digestible and pleasing to the taste. Jupiter, and the rest of the gods, foreseeing the consequences of these inventions, were amused or irritated at the short-sighted devices of the newly-formed creature, and left him to experience the sad effects of them. Thirst, the necessary concomitant of a flesh diet' (perhaps of all diet vitiated by culinary preparation), 'ensued; water was resorted to, and man forfeited the inestimable gift of health which he had received from heaven: he became diseased, the partaker of a precarious existence, and no longer descended slowly to his grave. ("Return to Nature". Cadell, 1811.)

But just disease to luxury succeeds,
And every death its own avenger breeds;
The fury passions from that blood began,
And turned on man a fiercer savage — man.

Man, and the animals whom he has infected with his society, or depraved by his dominion, are alone diseased. The wild hog, the mouflon, the bison, and the wolf; are perfectly exempt from malady, and invariably die either from external violence or natural old age. But the domestic hog, the sheep, the cow, and the dog, are subject to an incredible variety of distempers; and, like the corruptors of their nature, have physicians who thrive upon their miseries. The supereminence of man is like Satan's, a supereminence of pain; and the majority of his species, doomed to penury, disease, and crime, have reason to curse the untoward event that, by enabling him to communicate his sensations, raised him above the level of his fellow-animals. But the steps that have been taken are irrevocable. The whole of human science is comprised in one question: — How can the advantages of intellect and civilization be reconciled with the liberty and pure pleasures of natural life? How can we take the benefits and reject the evils of the system, which is now interwoven with all the fibres of our being? — I believe that abstinence from animal food and spirituous liquors would in a great measure capacitate us for the solution of this important question.

It is true that mental and bodily derangement is attributable in part to other deviations from rectitude and nature than those which concern diet. The mistakes cherished by society respecting the connection of the sexes, whence the misery and diseases of unsatisfied celibacy, unenjoying prostitution, and the premature arrival of puberty, necessarily spring; the putrid atmosphere of crowded cities; the exhalations of chemical processes; the muffling of our bodies in superfluous apparel; the absurd treatment of infants: — all these and innumerable other causes contribute their mite to the mass of human evil.

Comparative anatomy teaches us that man resembles frugivorous animals in everything, and carnivorous in nothing; he has neither claws wherewith to seize his prey, nor distinct and pointed teeth to tear the living fibre. A Mandarin of the first class, with nails two inches long, would probably find them alone inefficient to hold even a hare. After every subterfuge of gluttony, the bull must be degraded into the ox, and the ram into the wether, by an unnatural and inhuman operation, that the flaccid fibre may offer a fainter resistance to rebellious nature. It is only by softening and disguising dead flesh by culinary preparation that it is rendered susceptible of mastication or digestion; and that the sight of its bloody juices and raw horror does not excite intolerable loathing and disgust. Let the advocate of animal food force himself to a decisive experiment on its fitness, and, as Plutarch recommends, tear a living lamb with his teeth, and plunging his head into its vitals slake his thirst with the steaming blood; when fresh from the deed of horror, let him revert to the irresistible instincts of nature that would rise in judgement against it, and say, ‘Nature formed me for such work as this.’ Then, and then only, would he be consistent.

Man resembles no carnivorous animal. There is no exception, unless man be one, to the rule of herbivorous animals having cellulated colons.

The orang-outang perfectly resembles man both in the order and number of his teeth. The orang-outang is the most anthropomorphous of the ape tribe, all of which are strictly frugivorous. There is no other species of animals, which live on different food, in which this analogy exists. (Cuvier, “Lecons d’Anat. Comp”. tom. 3, pages 169, 373, 448, 465, 480. Rees’s “Cyclopaedia”, article Man.) In many frugivorous animals, the canine teeth

are more pointed and distinct than those of man. The resemblance also of the human stomach to that of the orang-outang is greater than to that of any other animal.

The intestines are also identical with those of herbivorous animals, which present a larger surface for absorption and have ample and cellulated colons. The caecum also, though short, is larger than that of carnivorous animals; and even here the orang-outang retains its accustomed similarity.

The structure of the human frame, then, is that of one fitted to a pure vegetable diet, in every essential particular. It is true that the reluctance to abstain from animal food, in those who have been long accustomed to its stimulus, is so great in some persons of weak minds as to be scarcely overcome; but this is far from bringing any argument in its favour. A lamb, which was fed for some time on flesh by a ship's crew, refused its natural diet at the end of the voyage. There are numerous instances of horses, sheep, oxen, and even wood-pigeons, having been taught to live upon flesh, until they have loathed their natural aliment. Young children evidently prefer pastry, oranges, apples, and other fruit, to the flesh of animals; until, by the gradual depravation of the digestive organs, the free use of vegetables has for a time produced serious inconveniences; FOR A TIME, I say, since there never was an instance wherein a change from spirituous liquors and animal food to vegetables and pure water has failed ultimately to invigorate the body, by rendering its juices bland and consentaneous, and to restore to the mind that cheerfulness and elasticity which not one in fifty possesses on the present system. A love of strong liquors is also with difficulty taught to infants. Almost every one remembers the wry faces which the first glass of port produced. Unsophisticated instinct is invariably unerring; but to decide on the fitness of animal food from the perverted appetites which its constrained adoption produces; is to make the criminal a judge in his own cause: it is even worse, it is appealing to the infatuated drunkard in a question of the salubrity of brandy.

What is the cause of morbid action in the animal system? Not the air we breathe, for our fellow-denizens of nature breathe the same uninjured; not the water we drink (if remote from the pollutions of man and his inventions (The necessity of resorting to some means of purifying water, and the

disease which arises from its adulteration in civilized countries, is sufficiently apparent. See Dr. Lambe's "Reports on Cancer". I do not assert that the use of water is in itself unnatural, but that the unperverted palate would swallow no liquid capable of occasioning disease.)), for the animals drink it too; not the earth we tread upon; not the unobscured sight of glorious nature, in the wood, the field, or the expanse of sky and ocean; nothing that we are or do in common with the undiseased inhabitants of the forest. Something, then, wherein we differ from them: our habit of altering our food by fire, so that our appetite is no longer a just criterion for the fitness of its gratification. Except in children, there remain no traces of that instinct which determines, in all other animals, what aliment is natural or otherwise; and so perfectly obliterated are they in the reasoning adults of our species, that it has become necessary to urge considerations drawn from comparative anatomy to prove that we are naturally frugivorous.

Crime is madness. Madness is disease. Whenever the cause of disease shall be discovered, the root, from which all vice and misery have so long overshadowed the globe, will lie bare to the axe. All the exertions of man, from that moment, may be considered as tending to the clear profit of his species. No sane mind in a sane body resolves upon a real crime. It is a man of violent passions, bloodshot eyes, and swollen veins, that alone can grasp the knife of murder. The system of a simple diet promises no Utopian advantages. It is no mere reform of legislation, whilst the furious passions and evil propensities of the human heart, in which it had its origin, are still unassuaged. It strikes at the root of all evil, and is an experiment which may be tried with success, not alone by nations, but by small societies, families, and even individuals. In no cases has a return to vegetable diet produced the slightest injury; in most it has been attended with changes undeniably beneficial. Should ever a physician be born with the genius of Locke, I am persuaded that he might trace all bodily and mental derangements to our unnatural habits, as clearly as that philosopher has traced all knowledge to sensation. What prolific sources of disease are not those mineral and vegetable poisons that have been introduced for its extirpation! How many thousands have become murderers and robbers, bigots and domestic tyrants, dissolute and abandoned adventurers, from the use of fermented liquors; who, had they slaked their thirst only with pure water, would have lived but to diffuse the happiness of their own unperverted feelings! How many

groundless opinions and absurd institutions have not received a general sanction from the sottishness and intemperance of individuals! Who will assert that, had the populace of Paris satisfied their hunger at the ever-furnished table of vegetable nature, they would have lent their brutal suffrage to the proscription-list of Robespierre? Could a set of men, whose passions were not perverted by unnatural stimuli, look with coolness on an auto da fe? Is it to be believed that a being of gentle feelings, rising from his meal of roots, would take delight in sports of blood? Was Nero a man of temperate life? could you read calm health in his cheek, flushed with ungovernable propensities of hatred for the human race? Did Muley Ismael's pulse beat evenly, was his skin transparent, did his eyes beam with healthfulness, and its invariable concomitants, cheerfulness and benignity? Though history has decided none of these questions, a child could not hesitate to answer in the negative. Surely the bile-suffused cheek of Buonaparte, his wrinkled brow, and yellow eye, the ceaseless inquietude of his nervous system, speak no less plainly the character of his unresting ambition than his murders and his victories. It is impossible, had Buonaparte descended from a race of vegetable feeders, that he could have had either the inclination or the power to ascend the throne of the Bourbons. The desire of tyranny could scarcely be excited in the individual, the power to tyrannize would certainly not be delegated by a society neither frenzied by inebriation nor rendered impotent and irrational by disease. Pregnant indeed with inexhaustible calamity is the renunciation of instinct, as it concerns our physical nature; arithmetic cannot enumerate, nor reason perhaps suspect, the multitudinous sources of disease in civilized life. Even common water, that apparently innoxious pabulum, when corrupted by the filth of populous cities, is a deadly and insidious destroyer. (Lambe's "Reports on Cancer".) Who can wonder that all the inducements held out by God Himself in the Bible to virtue should have been vainer than a nurse's tale; and that those dogmas, by which He has there excited and justified the most ferocious propensities, should have alone been deemed essential; whilst Christians are in the daily practice of all those habits which have infected with disease and crime, not only the reprobate sons, but those favoured children of the common Father's love? Omnipotence itself could not save them from the consequences of this original and universal sin.

There is no disease, bodily or mental, which adoption of vegetable diet and pure water has not infallibly mitigated, wherever the experiment has been fairly tried. Debility is gradually converted into strength; disease into healthfulness; madness, in all its hideous variety, from the ravings of the fettered maniac to the unaccountable irrationalities of ill-temper, that make a hell of domestic life, into a calm and considerate evenness of temper, that alone might offer a certain pledge of the future moral reformation of society. On a natural system of diet, old age would be our last and our only malady; the term of our existence would be protracted; we should enjoy life, and no longer preclude others from the enjoyment of it; all sensational delights would be infinitely more exquisite and perfect; the very sense of being would then be a continued pleasure, such as we now feel it in some few and favoured moments of our youth. By all that is sacred in our hopes for the human race, I conjure those who love happiness and truth to give a fair trial to the vegetable system. Reasoning is surely superfluous on a subject whose merits an experience of six months would set for ever at rest. But it is only among the enlightened and benevolent that so great a sacrifice of appetite and prejudice can be expected, even though its ultimate excellence should not admit of dispute. It is found easier, by the short-sighted victims of disease, to palliate their torments by medicine than to prevent them by regimen. The vulgar of all ranks are invariably sensual and indocile; yet I cannot but feel myself persuaded that when the benefits of vegetable diet are mathematically proved, when it is as clear that those who live naturally are exempt from premature death as that nine is not one, the most sottish of mankind will feel a preference towards a long and tranquil, contrasted with a short and painful, life. On the average, out of sixty persons four die in three years. Hopes are entertained that, in April, 1814, a statement will be given that sixty persons, all having lived more than three years on vegetables and pure water, are then IN PERFECT HEALTH. More than two years have now elapsed; NOT ONE OF THEM HAS DIED; no such example will be found in any sixty persons taken at random. Seventeen persons of all ages (the families of Dr. Lambe and Mr. Newton) have lived for seven years on this diet without a death, and almost without the slightest illness. Surely, when we consider that some of those were infants, and one a martyr to asthma now nearly subdued, we may challenge any seventeen persons taken at random in this city to exhibit a parallel case. Those who may have been excited to question the rectitude of established

habits of diet by these loose remarks, should consult Mr. Newton's luminous and eloquent essay. ("Return to Nature, or Defence of Vegetable Regimen". Cadell, 1811.)

When these proofs come fairly before the world, and are clearly seen by all who understand arithmetic, it is scarcely possible that abstinence from aliments demonstrably pernicious should not become universal. In proportion to the number of proselytes, so will be the weight of evidence; and when a thousand persons can be produced, living on vegetables and distilled water, who have to dread no disease but old age, the world will be compelled to regard animal flesh and fermented liquors as slow but certain poisons. The change which would be produced by simpler habits on political economy is sufficiently remarkable. The monopolizing eater of animal flesh would no longer destroy his constitution by devouring an acre at a meal, and many loaves of bread would cease to contribute to gout, madness and apoplexy, in the shape of a pint of porter, or a dram of gin, when appeasing the long-protracted famine of the hardworking peasant's hungry babes. The quantity of nutritious vegetable matter, consumed in fattening the carcase of an ox, would afford ten times the sustenance, undepraving indeed, and incapable of generating disease, if gathered immediately from the bosom of the earth. The most fertile districts of the habitable globe are now actually cultivated by men for animals, at a delay and waste of aliment absolutely incapable of calculation. It is only the wealthy that can, to any great degree, even now, indulge the unnatural craving for dead flesh, and they pay for the greater licence of the privilege by subjection to supernumerary diseases. Again, the spirit of the nation that should take the lead in this great reform would insensibly become agricultural; commerce, with all its vice, selfishness, and corruption, would gradually decline; more natural habits would produce gentler manners, and the excessive complication of political relations would be so far simplified that every individual might feel and understand why he loved his country, and took a personal interest in its welfare. How would England, for example, depend on the caprices of foreign rulers if she contained within herself all the necessaries, and despised whatever they possessed of the luxuries, of life? How could they starve her into compliance with their views? Of what consequence would it be that they refused to take her woollen manufactures, when large and fertile tracts of the island ceased to

be allotted to the waste of pasturage? On a natural system of diet we should require no spices from India; no wines from Portugal, Spain, France, or Madeira; none of those multitudinous articles of luxury, for which every corner of the globe is rifled, and which are the causes of so much individual rivalship, such calamitous and sanguinary national disputes. In the history of modern times, the avarice of commercial monopoly, no less than the ambition of weak and wicked chiefs, seems to have fomented the universal discord, to have added stubbornness to the mistakes of cabinets, and indocility to the infatuation of the people. Let it ever be remembered that it is the direct influence of commerce to make the interval between the richest and the poorest man wider and more unconquerable. Let it be remembered that it is a foe to everything of real worth and excellence in the human character. The odious and disgusting aristocracy of wealth is built upon the ruins of all that is good in chivalry or republicanism; and luxury is the forerunner of a barbarism scarce capable of cure. Is it impossible to realize a state of society, where all the energies of man shall be directed to the production of his solid happiness? Certainly, if this advantage (the object of all political speculation) be in any degree attainable, it is attainable only by a community which holds out no factitious incentives to the avarice and ambition of the few, and which is internally organized for the liberty, security, and comfort of the many. None must be entrusted with power (and money is the completest species of power) who do not stand pledged to use it exclusively for the general benefit. But the use of animal flesh and fermented liquors directly militates with this equality of the rights of man. The peasant cannot gratify these fashionable cravings without leaving his family to starve. Without disease and war, those sweeping curtailers of population, pasturage would include a waste too great to be afforded. The labour requisite to support a family is far lighter' than is usually supposed. (It has come under the author's experience that some of the workmen on an embankment in North Wales, who, in consequence of the inability of the proprietor to pay them, seldom received their wages, have supported large families by cultivating small spots of sterile ground by moonlight. In the notes to Pratt's poem, "Bread, or the Poor", is an account of an industrious labourer who, by working in a small garden, before and after his day's task, attained to an enviable state of independence.) The peasantry work, not only for themselves, but for the aristocracy, the army, and the manufacturers.

The advantage of a reform in diet is obviously greater than that of any other. It strikes at the root of the evil. To remedy the abuses of legislation, before we annihilate the propensities by which they are produced, is to suppose that by taking away the effect the cause will cease to operate. But the efficacy of this system depends entirely on the proselytism of individuals, and grounds its merits, as a benefit to the community, upon the total change of the dietetic habits in its members. It proceeds securely from a number of particular cases to one that is universal, and has this advantage over the contrary mode, that one error does not invalidate all that has gone before.

Let not too much, however, be expected from this system. The healthiest among us is not exempt from hereditary disease. The most symmetrical, athletic, and longlived is a being inexpressibly inferior to what he would have been, had not the unnatural habits of his ancestors accumulated for him a certain portion of malady and deformity. In the most perfect specimen of civilized man, something is still found wanting by the physiological critic. Can a return to nature, then, instantaneously eradicate predispositions that have been slowly taking root in the silence of innumerable ages? — Indubitably not. All that I contend for is, that from the moment of the relinquishing all unnatural habits no new disease is generated; and that the predisposition to hereditary maladies gradually perishes, for want of its accustomed supply. In cases of consumption, cancer, gout, asthma, and scrofula, such is the invariable tendency of a diet of vegetables and pure water.

Those who may be induced by these remarks to give the vegetable system a fair trial, should, in the first place, date the commencement of their practice from the moment of their conviction. All depends upon breaking through a pernicious habit resolutely and at once. Dr. Trotter asserts that no drunkard was ever reformed by gradually relinquishing his dram. (See Trotter on the Nervous Temperament.) Animal flesh, in its effects on the human stomach, is analogous to a dram. It is similar in the kind, though differing in the degree, of its operation. The proselyte to a pure diet must be warned to expect a temporary diminution of muscular strength. The subtraction of a powerful stimulus will suffice to account for this event. But it is only temporary, and is succeeded by an equable capability for exertion, far surpassing his former various and fluctuating strength. Above all, he will

acquire an easiness of breathing, by which such exertion is performed, with a remarkable exemption from that painful and difficult panting now felt by almost every one after hastily climbing an ordinary mountain. He will be equally capable of bodily exertion, or mental application, after as before his simple meal. He will feel none of the narcotic effects of ordinary diet. Irritability, the direct consequence of exhausting stimuli, would yield to the power of natural and tranquil impulses. He will no longer pine under the lethargy of ennui, that unconquerable weariness of life, more to be dreaded than death itself. He will escape the epidemic madness, which broods over its own injurious notions of the Deity, and 'realizes the hell that priests and beldams feign.' Every man forms, as it were, his god from his own character; to the divinity of one of simple habits no offering would be more acceptable than the happiness of his creatures. He would be incapable of hating or persecuting others for the love of God. He will find, moreover, a system of simple diet to be a system of perfect epicurism. He will no longer be incessantly occupied in blunting and destroying those organs from which he expects his gratification. The pleasures of taste to be derived from a dinner of potatoes, beans, peas, turnips, lettuces, with a dessert of apples, gooseberries, strawberries, currants, raspberries, and in winter, oranges, apples and pears, is far greater than is supposed. These who wait until they can eat this plain fare with the sauce of appetite will scarcely join with the hypocritical sensualist at a lord-mayor's feast, who declaims against the pleasures of the table. Solomon kept a thousand concubines, and owned in despair that all was vanity. The man whose happiness is constituted by the society of one amiable woman would find some difficulty in sympathizing with the disappointment of this venerable debauchee.

I address myself not only to the young enthusiast, the ardent devotee of truth and virtue, the pure and passionate moralist, yet unvitiated by the contagion of the world. He will embrace a pure system, from its abstract truth, its beauty, its simplicity, and its promise of wide-extended benefit; unless custom has turned poison into food, he will hate the brutal pleasures of the chase by instinct; it will be a contemplation full of horror, and disappointment to his mind, that beings capable of the gentlest and most admirable sympathies should take delight in the death-pangs and last convulsions of dying animals. The elderly man, whose youth has been poisoned by intemperance, or who has lived with apparent moderation, and

is afflicted with a wide variety of painful maladies, would find his account in a beneficial change produced without the risk of poisonous medicines. The mother, to whom the perpetual restlessness of disease and unaccountable deaths incident to her children are the causes of incurable unhappiness, would on this diet experience the satisfaction of beholding their perpetual healths and natural playfulness. (See Mr. Newton's book. His children are the most beautiful and healthy creatures it is possible to conceive; the girls are perfect models for a sculptor; their dispositions are also the most gentle and conciliating; the judicious treatment, which they experience in other points, may be a correlative cause of this. In the first five years of their life, of 18,000 children that are born, 7,500 die of various diseases; and how many more of those that survive are not rendered miserable by maladies not immediately mortal? The quality and quantity of a woman's milk are materially injured by the use of dead flesh. In an island near Iceland, where no vegetables are to be got, the children invariably die of tetanus before they are three weeks old, and the population is supplied from the mainland. — Sir G. Mackenzie's "History of Iceland". See also "Emile", chapter 1, pages 53, 54, 56.) The most valuable lives are daily destroyed by diseases that it is dangerous to palliate and impossible to cure by medicine. How much longer will man continue to pimp for the gluttony of Death, his most insidious, implacable, and eternal foe?

Alla drakontas agrious kaleite kai pardaleis kai leontas, autoi de miaiphoneite eis omoteta kataliponteS ekeinois ouden ekeinois men gar o phonos trophe, umin de opson estin…"Oti gar ouk estin anthropo kata phusin to sarkophagein, proton men apo ton somaton deloutai tes kataskeues. Oudeni gar eoike to anthropou soma ton epi sarkophagia gegonoton, ou grupotes cheilous, ouk ozutes onuchos, ou traxutes odontos prosestin, ou koilias eutonia kai pneumatos thermotes, trepsai kai katergasasthai dunate to baru kai kreodes all autothen e phusis te leioteti ton odonton kai te smikroteti tou stomatos kai te malakoteti tes glosses kai te pros pepsin ambluteti tou pneumatos, exomnutai ten sarkophagian. Ei de legeis pephukenai seauton epi toiauten edoden, o boulei phagein proton autos apokteinon, all autos dia seauton, me chesamenos kopidi mede tumpano tini mede pelekei alla, os lukoi kai arktoi kai leontes autoi osa esthiousi phoneuousin, anele degmati boun e stomati sun, e apna e lagoon diarrexon kai phage prospeson eti zontos, os ekeina…Emeis d' outos en to

miaiphono truphomen, ost ochon to kreas prosagoreuomen, eit ochon pros auto to kreas deometha, anamignuntes elaion oinon meli garon oxos edusmasi Suriakois Arabikois, oster ontos nekron entaphiazontes. Kai gar outos auton dialuthenton kai melachthenton kai tropon tina prosapenton ergon esti ten pechin kratesai, kai diakratepheises de deinas barutetas empoiei kai nosodeis apechias…Outo to proton agprion ti zoon ebrothe kai kakourgon, eit ornis tis e ichthus eilkusto kai geusamenon outo kai promeletesan en ekeinois to thonikon epi boun ergaten elthe kai to kosmion probaton kai ton oikouron alektruona kai kata mikron outo ten aplestian stomosantes epi sphagas anthropon kai polemous kai phonous proelthon. — Plout. peri tes Sarkophagias.

NOTE ON QUEEN MAB, BY MRS. SHELLEY.

Shelley was eighteen when he wrote “Queen Mab”; he never published it. When it was written, he had come to the decision that he was too young to be a ‘judge of controversies’; and he was desirous of acquiring ‘that sobriety of spirit which is the characteristic of true heroism.’ But he never doubted the truth or utility of his opinions; and, in printing and privately distributing “Queen Mab”, he believed that he should further their dissemination, without occasioning the mischief either to others or himself that might arise from publication. It is doubtful whether he would himself have admitted it into a collection of his works. His severe classical taste, refined by the constant study of the Greek poets, might have discovered defects that escape the ordinary reader; and the change his opinions underwent in many points would have prevented him from putting forth the speculations of his boyish days. But the poem is too beautiful in itself, and far too remarkable as the production of a boy of eighteen, to allow of its being passed over: besides that, having been frequently reprinted, the omission would be vain. In the former edition certain portions were left out, as shocking the general reader from the violence of their attack on religion. I myself had a painful feeling that such erasures might be looked upon as a mark of disrespect towards the author, and am glad to have the opportunity of restoring them. The notes also are reprinted entire — not because they are models of reasoning or lessons of truth, but because Shelley wrote them, and that all that a man at once so distinguished and so excellent ever did deserves to be preserved. The alterations his opinions underwent ought to be recorded, for they form his history.

A series of articles was published in the “New Monthly Magazine” during the autumn of the year 1832, written by a man of great talent, a fellow-collegian and warm friend of Shelley: they describe admirably the state of his mind during his collegiate life. Inspired with ardour for the acquisition of knowledge, endowed with the keenest sensibility and with the fortitude of a martyr, Shelley came among his fellow-creatures, congregated for the purposes of education, like a spirit from another sphere; too delicately organized for the rough treatment man uses towards man, especially in the season of youth, and too resolute in carrying out his own sense of good and

justice, not to become a victim. To a devoted attachment to those he loved he added a determined resistance to oppression. Refusing to fag at Eton, he was treated with revolting cruelty by masters and boys: this roused instead of taming his spirit, and he rejected the duty of obedience when it was enforced by menaces and punishment. To aversion to the society of his fellow-creatures, such as he found them when collected together in societies, where one egged on the other to acts of tyranny, was joined the deepest sympathy and compassion; while the attachment he felt for individuals, and the admiration with which he regarded their powers and their virtues, led him to entertain a high opinion of the perfectibility of human nature; and he believed that all could reach the highest grade of moral improvement, did not the customs and prejudices of society foster evil passions and excuse evil actions.

The oppression which, trembling at every nerve yet resolute to heroism, it was his ill-fortune to encounter at school and at college, led him to dissent in all things from those whose arguments were blows, whose faith appeared to engender blame and hatred. ‘During my existence,’ he wrote to a friend in 1812, ‘I have incessantly speculated, thought, and read.’ His readings were not always well chosen; among them were the works of the French philosophers: as far as metaphysical argument went, he temporarily became a convert. At the same time, it was the cardinal article of his faith that, if men were but taught and induced to treat their fellows with love, charity, and equal rights, this earth would realize paradise. He looked upon religion, as it is professed, and above all practised, as hostile instead of friendly to the cultivation of those virtues which would make men brothers.

Can this be wondered at? At the age of seventeen, fragile in health and frame, of the purest habits in morals, full of devoted generosity and universal kindness, glowing with ardour to attain wisdom, resolved at every personal sacrifice to do right, burning with a desire for affection and sympathy, — he was treated as a reprobate, cast forth as a criminal.

The cause was that he was sincere; that he believed the opinions which he entertained to be true. And he loved truth with a martyr’s love; he was ready to sacrifice station and fortune, and his dearest affections, at its shrine. The sacrifice was demanded from, and made by, a youth of seventeen. It is a

singular fact in the history of society in the civilized nations of modern times that no false step is so irretrievable as one made in early youth. Older men, it is true, when they oppose their fellows and transgress ordinary rules, carry a certain prudence or hypocrisy as a shield along with them. But youth is rash; nor can it imagine, while asserting what it believes to be true, and doing what it believes to be right, that it should be denounced as vicious, and pursued as a criminal.

Shelley possessed a quality of mind which experience has shown me to be of the rarest occurrence among human beings: this was his UNWORLDLINESS. The usual motives that rule men, prospects of present or future advantage, the rank and fortune of those around, the taunts and censures, or the praise, of those who were hostile to him, had no influence whatever over his actions, and apparently none over his thoughts. It is difficult even to express the simplicity and directness of purpose that adorned him. Some few might be found in the history of mankind, and some one at least among his own friends, equally disinterested and scornful, even to severe personal sacrifices, of every baser motive. But no one, I believe, ever joined this noble but passive virtue to equal active endeavours for the benefit of his friends and mankind in general, and to equal power to produce the advantages he desired. The world's brightest gauds and its most solid advantages were of no worth in his eyes, when compared to the cause of what he considered truth, and the good of his fellow-creatures. Born in a position which, to his inexperienced mind, afforded the greatest facilities to practise the tenets he espoused, he boldly declared the use he would make of fortune and station, and enjoyed the belief that he should materially benefit his fellow-creatures by his actions; while, conscious of surpassing powers of reason and imagination, it is not strange that he should, even while so young, have believed that his written thoughts would tend to disseminate opinions which he believed conducive to the happiness of the human race.

If man were a creature devoid of passion, he might have said and done all this with quietness. But he was too enthusiastic, and too full of hatred of all the ills he witnessed, not to scorn danger. Various disappointments tortured, but could not tame, his soul. The more enmity he met, the more earnestly he

became attached to his peculiar views, and hostile to those of the men who persecuted him.

He was animated to greater zeal by compassion for his fellow-creatures. His sympathy was excited by the misery with which the world is burning. He witnessed the sufferings of the poor, and was aware of the evils of ignorance. He desired to induce every rich man to despoil himself of superfluity, and to create a brotherhood of property and service, and was ready to be the first to lay down the advantages of his birth. He was of too uncompromising a disposition to join any party. He did not in his youth look forward to gradual improvement: nay, in those days of intolerance, now almost forgotten, it seemed as easy to look forward to the sort of millennium of freedom and brotherhood which he thought the proper state of mankind as to the present reign of moderation and improvement. Ill-health made him believe that his race would soon be run; that a year or two was all he had of life. He desired that these years should be useful and illustrious. He saw, in a fervent call on his fellow-creatures to share alike the blessings of the creation, to love and serve each other, the noblest work that life and time permitted him. In this spirit he composed “Queen Mab”.

He was a lover of the wonderful and wild in literature, but had not fostered these tastes at their genuine sources — the romances and chivalry of the middle ages — but in the perusal of such German works as were current in those days. Under the influence of these he, at the age of fifteen, wrote two short prose romances of slender merit. The sentiments and language were exaggerated, the composition imitative and poor. He wrote also a poem on the subject of Ahasuerus — being led to it by a German fragment he picked up, dirty and torn, in Lincoln’s Inn Fields. This fell afterwards into other hands, and was considerably altered before it was printed. Our earlier English poetry was almost unknown to him. The love and knowledge of Nature developed by Wordsworth — the lofty melody and mysterious beauty of Coleridge’s poetry — and the wild fantastic machinery and gorgeous scenery adopted by Southey — composed his favourite reading; the rhythm of “Queen Mab” was founded on that of “Thalaba”, and the first few lines bear a striking resemblance in spirit, though not in idea, to the opening of that poem. His fertile imagination, and ear tuned to the finest sense of harmony, preserved him from imitation. Another of his favourite

books was the poem of “Gebir” by Walter Savage Landor. From his boyhood he had a wonderful facility of versification, which he carried into another language; and his Latin school-verses were composed with an ease and correctness that procured for him prizes, and caused him to be resorted to by all his friends for help. He was, at the period of writing “Queen Mab”, a great traveller within the limits of England, Scotland, and Ireland. His time was spent among the loveliest scenes of these countries. Mountain and lake and forest were his home; the phenomena of Nature were his favourite study. He loved to inquire into their causes, and was addicted to pursuits of natural philosophy and chemistry, as far as they could be carried on as an amusement. These tastes gave truth and vivacity to his descriptions, and warmed his soul with that deep admiration for the wonders of Nature which constant association with her inspired.

He never intended to publish “Queen Mab” as it stands; but a few years after, when printing “Alastor”, he extracted a small portion which he entitled “The Daemon of the World”. In this he changed somewhat the versification, and made other alterations scarcely to be called improvements.

Some years after, when in Italy, a bookseller published an edition of “Queen Mab” as it originally stood. Shelley was hastily written to by his friends, under the idea that, deeply injurious as the mere distribution of the poem had proved, the publication might awaken fresh persecutions. At the suggestion of these friends he wrote a letter on the subject, printed in the “Examiner” newspaper — with which I close this history of his earliest work.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE ‘EXAMINER.’

‘Sir,

‘Having heard that a poem entitled “Queen Mab” has been surreptitiously published in London, and that legal proceedings have been instituted against the publisher, I request the favour of your insertion of the following explanation of the affair, as it relates to me.

‘A poem entitled “Queen Mab” was written by me at the age of eighteen, I daresay in a sufficiently intemperate spirit — but even then was not intended for publication, and a few copies only were struck off, to be distributed among my personal friends. I have not seen this production for several years. I doubt not but that it is perfectly worthless in point of literary composition; and that, in all that concerns moral and political speculation, as well as in the subtler discriminations of metaphysical and religious doctrine, it is still more crude and immature. I am a devoted enemy to religious, political, and domestic oppression; and I regret this publication, not so much from literary vanity, as because I fear it is better fitted to injure than to serve the sacred cause of freedom. I have directed my solicitor to apply to Chancery for an injunction to restrain the sale; but, after the precedent of Mr. Southey’s “Wat Tyler” (a poem written, I believe, at the same age, and with the same unreflecting enthusiasm), with little hope of success.

‘Whilst I exonerate myself from all share in having divulged opinions hostile to existing sanctions, under the form, whatever it may be, which they assume in this poem, it is scarcely necessary for me to protest against the system of inculcating the truth of Christianity or the excellence of Monarchy, however true or however excellent they may be, by such equivocal arguments as confiscation and imprisonment, and invective and slander, and the insolent violation of the most sacred ties of Nature and society.

‘SIR,

‘I am your obliged and obedient servant,’

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

‘Pisa, June 22, 1821.’

INDIVIDUAL POEMS

Following the untimely death of Shelley at the age of 29, his second wife, Mary Shelley, collected together his verse and fragments, many of which were published for the first time in 1839. Previously, many of the poems had appeared in various periodicals, magazines or obscure collections. In this section, readers will find some of Shelley's most famous works, with poems such as *The Skylark*, the sonnet *Ozymandias*, *Music When Soft Voices Die*, *I Arise From Dreams of Thee*, *When the Lamp is Shattered* and the famous *Ode to the West Wind* being among his most celebrated achievements in verse. During his short life, Shelley was often subjected to severe judgment, mostly due to his atheistic views, resulting in his poetic power being recognised by only a few. However, with the publication of the 1839 collection, carefully arranged and documented by the poet's wife, Shelley's lyrical genius was established for the first time.

Shelley, 1819

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POEMS WRITTEN IN 1822.

THE ZUCCA.
THE MAGNETIC LADY TO HER PATIENT.
LINES: 'WHEN THE LAMP IS SHATTERED'.
TO JANE: THE INVITATION.
TO JANE: THE RECOLLECTION.
THE PINE FOREST OF THE CASCINE NEAR PISA.
WITH A GUITAR, TO JANE.

TO JANE: ‘THE KEEN STARS WERE TWINKLING’.
A DIRGE.
LINES WRITTEN IN THE BAY OF LERICI.
LINES: ‘WE MEET NOT AS WE PARTED’.
THE ISLE.
TO THE MOON. (FRAGMENT)
EPITAPH.

Mary Shelley, (née Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin; 1797–1851) was an English novelist, short story writer, dramatist, essayist, biographer and travel writer. After her husband's death, Mary was instrumental is establishing Shelley's poetic reputation.

JUVENILIA.

VERSES ON A CAT.

(Published by Hogg, "Life of Shelley", 1858; dated 1800.)

1.
A cat in distress,
Nothing more, nor less;
Good folks, I must faithfully tell ye,
As I am a sinner,
It waits for some dinner
To stuff out its own little belly.

2.
You would not easily guess
All the modes of distress
Which torture the tenants of earth;
And the various evils,
Which like so many devils,
Attend the poor souls from their birth.

3.
Some a living require,
And others desire
An old fellow out of the way;
And which is the best
I leave to be guessed,
For I cannot pretend to say.

4.
One wants society,
Another variety,
Others a tranquil life;
Some want food,
Others, as good,
Only want a wife.

5.
But this poor little cat
Only wanted a rat,
To stuff out its own little maw;
And it were as good
SOME people had such food,
To make them HOLD THEIR JAW!

FRAGMENT: OMENS.

(Published by Medwin, "Shelley Papers", 1833; dated 1807.)

Hark! the owlet flaps his wings
In the pathless dell beneath;
Hark! 'tis the night-raven sings
Tidings of approaching death.

EPITAPHIUM.

(LATIN VERSION OF THE EPITAPH IN GRAY'S ELEGY.)

(Published by Medwin, "Life of Shelley", 1847; dated 1808-9.)

1.
Hic sinu fessum caput hospitali
Cespitis dormit juvenis, nec illi
Fata ridebant, popularis ille
Nescius aurae.

2.
Musa non vultu genus arroganti
Rustica natum grege despicata,
Et suum tristis puerum notavit
Sollicitudo.

3.
Indoles illi bene larga, pectus
Veritas sedem sibi vindicavit,
Et pari tantis meritis beavit
Munere coelum.

4.
Omne quad moestis habuit miserto
Corde largivit lacrimam, recepit
Omne quod coelo voluit, fidelis
Pectus amici.

5.
Longius sed tu fuge curiosus
Caeteras laudes fuge suspicari,
Caeteras culpas fuge velle tractas
Sede tremenda.

6.
Spe tremescentes recubant in illa
Sede virtutes pariterque culpae,
In sui Patris gremio, tremenda
Sede Deique.

IN HOROLOGIUM.

(Published by Medwin, "Life of Shelley", 1847; dated 1809.)

Inter marmoreas Leonorae pendula colles
Fortunata nimis Machina dicit horas.
Quas MANIBUS premit illa duas insensa papillas
Cur mihi sit DIGITO tangere, amata, nefas?

A DIALOGUE.

(Published (without title) by Hogg, "Life of Shelley", 1858; dated 1809. Included in the Esdaile manuscript book.)

DEATH:
For my dagger is bathed in the blood of the brave,
I come, care-worn tenant of life, from the grave,
Where Innocence sleeps 'neath the peace-giving sod,
And the good cease to tremble at Tyranny's nod;
I offer a calm habitation to thee, —
Say, victim of grief, wilt thou slumber with me?
My mansion is damp, cold silence is there,
But it lulls in oblivion the fiends of despair;
Not a groan of regret, not a sigh, not a breath,
Dares dispute with grim Silence the empire of Death.
I offer a calm habitation to thee, —
Say, victim of grief, wilt thou slumber with me?

MORTAL:
Mine eyelids are heavy; my soul seeks repose,
It longs in thy cells to embosom its woes,
It longs in thy cells to deposit its load,
Where no longer the scorpions of Perfidy goad, —
Where the phantoms of Prejudice vanish away,
And Bigotry's bloodhounds lose scent of their prey.
Yet tell me, dark Death, when thine empire is o'er,
What awaits on Futurity's mist-covered shore?

DEATH:
Cease, cease, wayward Mortal! I dare not unveil
The shadows that float o'er Eternity's vale;
Nought waits for the good but a spirit of Love,
That will hail their blest advent to regions above.
For Love, Mortal, gleams through the gloom of my sway,
And the shades which surround me fly fast at its ray.

Hast thou loved? — Then depart from these regions of hate,
And in slumber with me blunt the arrows of fate.
I offer a calm habitation to thee. —
Say, victim of grief, wilt thou slumber with me?

MORTAL:
Oh! sweet is thy slumber! oh! sweet is the ray
Which after thy night introduces the day;
How concealed, how persuasive, self-interest's breath,
Though it floats to mine ear from the bosom of Death!
I hoped that I quite was forgotten by all,
Yet a lingering friend might be grieved at my fall,
And duty forbids, though I languish to die,
When departure might heave Virtue's breast with a sigh.
O Death! O my friend! snatch this form to thy shrine,
And I fear, dear destroyer, I shall not repine.

TO THE MOONBEAM.

(Published by Hogg, "Life of Shelley", 1858: dated 1809. Included in the Esdaile manuscript book.)

1.
Moonbeam, leave the shadowy vale,
To bathe this burning brow.
Moonbeam, why art thou so pale,
As thou walkest o'er the dewy dale,
Where humble wild-flowers grow?
Is it to mimic me?
But that can never be;
For thine orb is bright,
And the clouds are light,
That at intervals shadow the star-studded night.

2.
Now all is deathy still on earth;
Nature's tired frame reposes;
And, ere the golden morning's birth
Its radiant hues discloses,
Flies forth its balmy breath.
But mine is the midnight of Death,
And Nature's morn
To my bosom forlorn
Brings but a gloomier night, implants a deadlier thorn.

3.
Wretch! Suppress the glare of madness
Struggling in thine haggard eye,
For the keenest throb of sadness,
Pale Despair's most sickening sigh,
Is but to mimic me;
And this must ever be,
When the twilight of care,

And the night of despair,
Seem in my breast but joys to the pangs that rankle there.

THE SOLITARY.

(Published by Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1870; dated 1810. Included in the Esdaile manuscript book.)

1.
Dar'st thou amid the varied multitude
To live alone, an isolated thing?
To see the busy beings round thee spring,
And care for none; in thy calm solitude,
A flower that scarce breathes in the desert rude
To Zephyr's passing wing?

2.
Not the swart Pariah in some Indian grove,
Lone, lean, and hunted by his brother's hate,
Hath drunk so deep the cup of bitter fate
As that poor wretch who cannot, cannot love:
He bears a load which nothing can remove,
A killing, withering weight.

3.
He smiles—'tis sorrow's deadliest mockery;
He speaks — the cold words flow not from his soul;
He acts like others, drains the genial bowl, —
Yet, yet he longs — although he fears — to die;
He pants to reach what yet he seems to fly,
Dull life's extremest goal.

TO DEATH.

(Published (without title) by Hogg, "Life of Shelley", 1858; dated 1810. Included (under the title, "To Death") in the Esdaile manuscript book.)

Death! where is thy victory?
To triumph whilst I die,
To triumph whilst thine ebon wing
Enfolds my shuddering soul?
O Death! where is thy sting?
Not when the tides of murder roll,
When nations groan, that kings may bask in bliss,
Death! canst thou boast a victory such as this —
When in his hour of pomp and power
His blow the mightiest murderer gave,
Mid Nature's cries the sacrifice
Of millions to glut the grave;
When sunk the Tyrant Desolation's slave;
Or Freedom's life-blood streamed upon thy shrine;
Stern Tyrant, couldst thou boast a victory such as mine?

To know in dissolution's void
That mortals' baubles sunk decay;
That everything, but Love, destroyed
Must perish with its kindred clay, —
Perish Ambition's crown,
Perish her sceptred sway:
From Death's pale front fades Pride's fastidious frown.
In Death's damp vault the lurid fires decay,
That Envy lights at heaven-born Virtue's beam —
That all the cares subside,
Which lurk beneath the tide
Of life's unquiet stream; —
Yes! this is victory!
And on yon rock, whose dark form glooms the sky,
To stretch these pale limbs, when the soul is fled;

To baffle the lean passions of their prey,
To sleep within the palace of the dead!
Oh! not the King, around whose dazzling throne
His countless courtiers mock the words they say,
Triumphs amid the bud of glory blown,
As I in this cold bed, and faint expiring groan!

Tremble, ye proud, whose grandeur mocks the woe
Which props the column of unnatural state!
You the plainings, faint and low,
From Misery's tortured soul that flow,
Shall usher to your fate.

Tremble, ye conquerors, at whose fell command
The war-fiend riots o'er a peaceful land!
You Desolation's gory throng
Shall bear from Victory along
To that mysterious strand.

LOVE'S ROSE.

(Published (without title) by Hogg, "Life of Shelley", 1858; dated 1810. Included in the Esdaile manuscript book.)

1.
Hopes, that swell in youthful breasts,
Live not through the waste of time!
Love's rose a host of thorns invests;
Cold, ungenial is the clime,
Where its honours blow.
Youth says, 'The purple flowers are mine,'
Which die the while they glow.

2.
Dear the boon to Fancy given,
Retracted whilst it's granted:
Sweet the rose which lives in Heaven,
Although on earth 'tis planted,
Where its honours blow,
While by earth's slaves the leaves are riven
Which die the while they glow.

3.
Age cannot Love destroy,
But perfidy can blast the flower,
Even when in most unwary hour
It blooms in Fancy's bower.
Age cannot Love destroy,
But perfidy can rend the shrine
In which its vermeil splendours shine.

EYES: A FRAGMENT.

(Published by Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1870; dated 1810. Included (four unpublished eight-line stanzas) in the Esdaile manuscript book.))

How eloquent are eyes!
Not the rapt poet's frenzied lay
When the soul's wildest feelings stray
Can speak so well as they.
How eloquent are eyes!
Not music's most impassioned note
On which Love's warmest fervours float
Like them bids rapture rise.

Love, look thus again, —
That your look may light a waste of years,
Darting the beam that conquers cares
Through the cold shower of tears.
Love, look thus again!

BIGOTRY'S VICTIM.

(Published (without title) by Hogg, "Life of Shelley", 1858; dated 1809-10. The title is Rossetti's (1870).)

1.
Dares the lama, most fleet of the sons of the wind,
The lion to rouse from his skull-covered lair?
When the tiger approaches can the fast-fleeting hind
Repose trust in his footsteps of air?
No! Abandoned he sinks in a trance of despair,
The monster transfixes his prey,
On the sand flows his life-blood away;
Whilst India's rocks to his death-yells reply,
Protracting the horrible harmony.

2.
Yet the fowl of the desert, when danger encroaches,
Dares fearless to perish defending her brood,
Though the fiercest of cloud-piercing tyrants approaches
Thirsting — ay, thirsting for blood;
And demands, like mankind, his brother for food;
Yet more lenient, more gentle than they;
For hunger, not glory, the prey
Must perish. Revenge does not howl in the dead.
Nor ambition with fame crown the murderer's head.

3.
Though weak as the lama that bounds on the mountains,
And endued not with fast-fleeting footsteps of air,
Yet, yet will I draw from the purest of fountains,
Though a fiercer than tiger is there.
Though, more dreadful than death, it scatters despair,
Though its shadow eclipses the day,
And the darkness of deepest dismay

Spreads the influence of soul-chilling terror around,
And lowers on the corpses, that rot on the ground.

4.
They came to the fountain to draw from its stream
Waves too pure, too celestial, for mortals to see;
They bathed for awhile in its silvery beam,
Then perished, and perished like me.
For in vain from the grasp of the Bigot I flee;
The most tenderly loved of my soul
Are slaves to his hated control.
He pursues me, he blasts me! ‘Tis in vain that I fly: -
What remains, but to curse him, — to curse him and die?

ON AN ICICLE THAT CLUNG TO THE GRASS OF A GRAVE.

(Published (without title) by Hogg, "Life of Shelley", 1858; dated 1809-10. The poem, with title as above, is included in the Esdaile manuscript book.)

1.
Oh! take the pure gem to where southerly breezes,
Waft repose to some bosom as faithful as fair,
In which the warm current of love never freezes,
As it rises unmingled with selfishness there,
Which, untainted by pride, unpolluted by care,
Might dissolve the dim icedrop, might bid it arise,
Too pure for these regions, to gleam in the skies.

2.
Or where the stern warrior, his country defending,
Dares fearless the dark-rolling battle to pour,
Or o'er the fell corpse of a dread tyrant bending,
Where patriotism red with his guilt-reeking gore
Plants Liberty's flag on the slave-peopled shore,
With victory's cry, with the shout of the free,
Let it fly, taintless Spirit, to mingle with thee.

3.
For I found the pure gem, when the daybeam returning,
Ineffectual gleams on the snow-covered plain,
When to others the wished-for arrival of morning
Brings relief to long visions of soul-racking pain;
But regret is an insult — to grieve is in vain:
And why should we grieve that a spirit so fair
Seeks Heaven to mix with its own kindred there?

4.
But still 'twas some Spirit of kindness descending
To share in the load of mortality's woe,

Who over thy lowly-built sepulchre bending
Bade sympathy's tenderest teardrop to flow.
Not for THEE soft compassion celestials did know,
But if ANGELS can weep, sure MAN may repine,
May weep in mute grief o'er thy low-laid shrine.

5.
And did I then say, for the altar of glory,
That the earliest, the loveliest of flowers I'd entwine,
Though with millions of blood-reeking victims 'twas gory,
Though the tears of the widow polluted its shrine,
Though around it the orphans, the fatherless pine?
Oh! Fame, all thy glories I'd yield for a tear
To shed on the grave of a heart so sincere.

LOVE.

(Published (without title) by Hogg, "Life of Shelley", 1858; dated 1811. The title is Rossetti's (1870).)

Why is it said thou canst not live
In a youthful breast and fair,
Since thou eternal life canst give,
Canst bloom for ever there?
Since withering pain no power possessed,
Nor age, to blanch thy vermeil hue,
Nor time's dread victor, death, confessed,
Though bathed with his poison dew,
Still thou retain'st unchanging bloom,
Fixed tranquil, even in the tomb.
And oh! when on the blest, reviving,
The day-star dawns of love,
Each energy of soul surviving
More vivid, soars above,
Hast thou ne'er felt a rapturous thrill,
Like June's warm breath, athwart thee fly,
O'er each idea then to steal,
When other passions die?
Felt it in some wild noonday dream,
When sitting by the lonely stream,
Where Silence says, 'Mine is the dell';
And not a murmur from the plain,
And not an echo from the fell,
Disputes her silent reign.

ON A FETE AT CARLTON HOUSE: FRAGMENT.

(Published by Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1870; dated 1811.)

By the mossy brink,
With me the Prince shall sit and think;
Shall muse in visioned Regency,
Rapt in bright dreams of dawning Royalty.

TO A STAR.

(Published (without title) by Hogg, "Life of Shelley", 1858; dated 1811. The title is Rossetti's (1870).)

Sweet star, which gleaming o'er the darksome scene
Through fleecy clouds of silvery radiance fliest,
Spanglet of light on evening's shadowy veil,
Which shrouds the day-beam from the waveless lake,
Lighting the hour of sacred love; more sweet
Than the expiring morn-star's paly fires: —
Sweet star! When wearied Nature sinks to sleep,
And all is hushed, — all, save the voice of Love,
Whose broken murmurings swell the balmy blast
Of soft Favonius, which at intervals
Sighs in the ear of stillness, art thou aught but
Lulling the slaves of interest to repose
With that mild, pitying gaze? Oh, I would look
In thy dear beam till every bond of sense
Became enamoured —

TO MARY WHO DIED IN THIS OPINION.

(Published by Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1870; dated 1810-11.)

1.
Maiden, quench the glare of sorrow
Struggling in thine haggard eye:
Firmness dare to borrow
From the wreck of destiny;
For the ray morn's bloom revealing
Can never boast so bright an hue
As that which mocks concealing,
And sheds its loveliest light on you.

2.
Yet is the tie departed
Which bound thy lovely soul to bliss?
Has it left thee broken-hearted
In a world so cold as this?
Yet, though, fainting fair one,
Sorrow's self thy cup has given,
Dream thou'lt meet thy dear one,
Never more to part, in Heaven.

3.
Existence would I barter
For a dream so dear as thine,
And smile to die a martyr
On affection's bloodless shrine.
Nor would I change for pleasure
That withered hand and ashy cheek,
If my heart enshrined a treasure
Such as forces thine to break.

A TALE OF SOCIETY AS IT IS: FROM FACTS, 1811.

(Published (from Esdaile manuscript with title as above) by Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1870. Rossetti's title is "Mother and Son".)

1.
She was an aged woman; and the years
Which she had numbered on her toilsome way
Had bowed her natural powers to decay.
She was an aged woman; yet the ray
Which faintly glimmered through her starting tears,
Pressed into light by silent misery,
Hath soul's imperishable energy.
She was a cripple, and incapable
To add one mite to gold-fed luxury:
And therefore did her spirit dimly feel
That poverty, the crime of tainting stain,
Would merge her in its depths, never to rise again.

2.
One only son's love had supported her.
She long had struggled with infirmity,
Lingering to human life-scenes; for to die,
When fate has spared to rend some mental tie,
Would many wish, and surely fewer dare.
But, when the tyrant's bloodhounds forced the child
For his cursed power unhallowed arms to wield —
Bend to another's will — become a thing
More senseless than the sword of battlefield —
Then did she feel keen sorrow's keenest sting;
And many years had passed ere comfort they would bring.

3.
For seven years did this poor woman live
In unparticipated solitude.

Thou mightst have seen her in the forest rude
Picking the scattered remnants of its wood.
If human, thou mightst then have learned to grieve.
The gleanings of precarious charity
Her scantiness of food did scarce supply.
The proofs of an unspeaking sorrow dwelt
Within her ghastly hollowness of eye:
Each arrow of the season's change she felt.
Yet still she groans, ere yet her race were run,
One only hope: it was — once more to see her son.

4.
It was an eve of June, when every star
Spoke peace from Heaven to those on earth that live.
She rested on the moor. 'Twas such an eve
When first her soul began indeed to grieve:
Then he was here; now he is very far.
The sweetness of the balmy evening
A sorrow o'er her aged soul did fling,
Yet not devoid of rapture's mingled tear:
A balm was in the poison of the sting.
This aged sufferer for many a year
Had never felt such comfort. She suppressed
A sigh — and turning round, clasped William to her breast!

5.
And, though his form was wasted by the woe
Which tyrants on their victims love to wreak,
Though his sunk eyeballs and his faded cheek
Of slavery's violence and scorn did speak,
Yet did the aged woman's bosom glow.
The vital fire seemed re-illumed within
By this sweet unexpected welcoming.
Oh, consummation of the fondest hope
That ever soared on Fancy's wildest wing!
Oh, tenderness that foundst so sweet a scope!

Prince who dost pride thee on thy mighty sway,
When THOU canst feel such love, thou shalt be great as they!

6.
Her son, compelled, the country's foes had fought,
Had bled in battle; and the stern control
Which ruled his sinews and coerced his soul
Utterly poisoned life's unmingled bowl,
And unsubduable evils on him brought.
He was the shadow of the lusty child
Who, when the time of summer season smiled,
Did earn for her a meal of honesty,
And with affectionate discourse beguiled
The keen attacks of pain and poverty;
Till Power, as envying her this only joy,
From her maternal bosom tore the unhappy boy.

7.
And now cold charity's unwelcome dole
Was insufficient to support the pair;
And they would perish rather than would bear
The law's stern slavery, and the insolent stare
With which law loves to rend the poor man's soul —
The bitter scorn, the spirit-sinking noise
Of heartless mirth which women, men, and boys
Wake in this scene of legal misery.

…

TO THE REPUBLICANS OF NORTH AMERICA.

(Published (from the Esdaile manuscript with title as above) by Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1870; dated 1812. Rossetti's title is "The Mexican Revolution".)

1.
Brothers! between you and me
Whirlwinds sweep and billows roar:
Yet in spirit oft I see
On thy wild and winding shore
Freedom's bloodless banners wave, —
Feel the pulses of the brave
Unextinguished in the grave, —
See them drenched in sacred gore, —
Catch the warrior's gasping breath
Murmuring 'Liberty or death!'

2.
Shout aloud! Let every slave,
Crouching at Corruption's throne,
Start into a man, and brave
Racks and chains without a groan:
And the castle's heartless glow,
And the hovel's vice and woe,
Fade like gaudy flowers that blow —
Weeds that peep, and then are gone
Whilst, from misery's ashes risen,
Love shall burst the captive's prison.

3.
Cotopaxi! bid the sound
Through thy sister mountains ring,
Till each valley smile around
At the blissful welcoming!
And, O thou stern Ocean deep,

Thou whose foamy billows sweep
Shores where thousands wake to weep
Whilst they curse a villain king,
On the winds that fan thy breast
Bear thou news of Freedom's rest!

4.
Can the daystar dawn of love,
Where the flag of war unfurled
Floats with crimson stain above
The fabric of a ruined world?
Never but to vengeance driven
When the patriot's spirit shriven
Seeks in death its native Heaven!
There, to desolation hurled,
Widowed love may watch thy bier,
Balm thee with its dying tear.

TO IRELAND.

(Published, 1-10, by Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1870; 11-17, 25-28, by Dowden, "Life of Shelley", 1887; 18-24 by Kingsland, "Poet-Lore", July, 1892. Dated 1812.)

1.
Bear witness, Erin! when thine injured isle
Sees summer on its verdant pastures smile,
Its cornfields waving in the winds that sweep
The billowy surface of thy circling deep!
Thou tree whose shadow o'er the Atlantic gave
Peace, wealth and beauty, to its friendly wave, its blossoms fade,
And blighted are the leaves that cast its shade;
Whilst the cold hand gathers its scanty fruit,
Whose chillness struck a canker to its root.

2.
I could stand
Upon thy shores, O Erin, and could count
The billows that, in their unceasing swell,
Dash on thy beach, and every wave might seem
An instrument in Time the giant's grasp,
To burst the barriers of Eternity.
Proceed, thou giant, conquering and to conquer;
March on thy lonely way! The nations fall
Beneath thy noiseless footstep; pyramids
That for millenniums have defied the blast,
And laughed at lightnings, thou dost crush to nought.
Yon monarch, in his solitary pomp,
Is but the fungus of a winter day
That thy light footstep presses into dust.
Thou art a conqueror, Time; all things give way
Before thee but the 'fixed and virtuous will';
The sacred sympathy of soul which was
When thou wert not, which shall be when thou perishest.

. . .

ON ROBERT EMMET'S GRAVE.

(Published from the Esdaile manuscript book by Dowden, "Life of Shelley", 1887; dated 1812.)

…

6.
No trump tells thy virtues — the grave where they rest
With thy dust shall remain unpolluted by fame,
Till thy foes, by the world and by fortune caressed,
Shall pass like a mist from the light of thy name.

7.
When the storm-cloud that lowers o'er the day-beam is gone,
Unchanged, unextinguished its life-spring will shine;
When Erin has ceased with their memory to groan,
She will smile through the tears of revival on thine.

THE RETROSPECT: CWM ELAN, 1812.

(Published from the Esdaile manuscript book by Dowden, "Life of Shelley", 1887.)

A scene, which 'wildered fancy viewed
In the soul's coldest solitude,
With that same scene when peaceful love
Flings rapture's colour o'er the grove,
When mountain, meadow, wood and stream
With unalloying glory gleam,
And to the spirit's ear and eye
Are unison and harmony.
The moonlight was my dearer day;
Then would I wander far away,
And, lingering on the wild brook's shore
To hear its unremitting roar,
Would lose in the ideal flow
All sense of overwhelming woe;
Or at the noiseless noon of night
Would climb some heathy mountain's height,
And listen to the mystic sound
That stole in fitful gasps around.
I joyed to see the streaks of day
Above the purple peaks decay,
And watch the latest line of light
Just mingling with the shades of night;
For day with me was time of woe
When even tears refused to flow;
Then would I stretch my languid frame
Beneath the wild woods' gloomiest shade,
And try to quench the ceaseless flame
That on my withered vitals preyed;
Would close mine eyes and dream I were
On some remote and friendless plain,
And long to leave existence there,

If with it I might leave the pain
That with a finger cold and lean
Wrote madness on my withering mien.

It was not unrequited love
That bade my ‘wildered spirit rove;
‘Twas not the pride disdaining life,
That with this mortal world at strife
Would yield to the soul’s inward sense,
Then groan in human impotence,
And weep because it is not given
To taste on Earth the peace of Heaven.
‘Twas not that in the narrow sphere
Where Nature fixed my wayward fate
There was no friend or kindred dear
Formed to become that spirit’s mate,
Which, searching on tired pinion, found
Barren and cold repulse around;
Oh, no! yet each one sorrow gave
New graces to the narrow grave.
For broken vows had early quelled
The stainless spirit’s vestal flame;
Yes! whilst the faithful bosom swelled,
Then the envenomed arrow came,
And Apathy’s unaltering eye
Beamed coldness on the misery;
And early I had learned to scorn
The chains of clay that bound a soul
Panting to seize the wings of morn,
And where its vital fires were born
To soar, and spur the cold control
Which the vile slaves of earthly night
Would twine around its struggling flight.

Oh, many were the friends whom fame
Had linked with the unmeaning name,
Whose magic marked among mankind

The casket of my unknown mind,
Which hidden from the vulgar glare
Imbibed no fleeting radiance there.
My darksome spirit sought — it found
A friendless solitude around.
For who that might undaunted stand,
The saviour of a sinking land,
Would crawl, its ruthless tyrant's slave,
And fatten upon Freedom's grave,
Though doomed with her to perish, where
The captive clasps abhorred despair.

They could not share the bosom's feeling,
Which, passion's every throb revealing,
Dared force on the world's notice cold
Thoughts of unprofitable mould,
Who bask in Custom's fickle ray,
Fit sunshine of such wintry day!
They could not in a twilight walk
Weave an impassioned web of talk,
Till mysteries the spirits press
In wild yet tender awfulness,
Then feel within our narrow sphere
How little yet how great we are!
But they might shine in courtly glare,
Attract the rabble's cheapest stare,
And might command where'er they move
A thing that bears the name of love;
They might be learned, witty, gay,
Foremost in fashion's gilt array,
On Fame's emblazoned pages shine,
Be princes' friends, but never mine!

Ye jagged peaks that frown sublime,
Mocking the blunted scythe of Time,
Whence I would watch its lustre pale
Steal from the moon o'er yonder vale

Thou rock, whose bosom black and vast,
Bared to the stream's unceasing flow,
Ever its giant shade doth cast
On the tumultuous surge below:

Woods, to whose depths retires to die
The wounded Echo's melody,
And whither this lone spirit bent
The footstep of a wild intent:

Meadows! whose green and spangled breast
These fevered limbs have often pressed,
Until the watchful fiend Despair
Slept in the soothing coolness there!
Have not your varied beauties seen
The sunken eye, the withering mien,
Sad traces of the unuttered pain
That froze my heart and burned my brain.
How changed since Nature's summer form
Had last the power my grief to charm,
Since last ye soothed my spirit's sadness,
Strange chaos of a mingled madness!
Changed! — not the loathsome worm that fed
In the dark mansions of the dead,
Now soaring through the fields of air,
And gathering purest nectar there,
A butterfly, whose million hues
The dazzled eye of wonder views,
Long lingering on a work so strange,
Has undergone so bright a change.
How do I feel my happiness?
I cannot tell, but they may guess
Whose every gloomy feeling gone,
Friendship and passion feel alone;
Who see mortality's dull clouds
Before affection's murmur fly,
Whilst the mild glances of her eye

Pierce the thin veil of flesh that shrouds
The spirit's inmost sanctuary.
O thou! whose virtues latest known,
First in this heart yet claim'st a throne;
Whose downy sceptre still shall share
The gentle sway with virtue there;
Thou fair in form, and pure in mind,
Whose ardent friendship rivets fast
The flowery band our fates that bind,
Which incorruptible shall last
When duty's hard and cold control
Has thawed around the burning soul, —
The gloomiest retrospects that bind
With crowns of thorn the bleeding mind,
The prospects of most doubtful hue
That rise on Fancy's shuddering view, —
Are gilt by the reviving ray
Which thou hast flung upon my day.

FRAGMENT OF A SONNET.

TO HARRIET.

(Published from the Esdaile manuscript book by Dowden, "Life of Shelley", 1887; dated August 1, 1812.)

Ever as now with Love and Virtue's glow
May thy unwithering soul not cease to burn,
Still may thine heart with those pure thoughts o'erflow
Which force from mine such quick and warm return.

TO HARRIET.

(Published, 5-13, by Forman, "Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1876; 58-69, by Shelley, "Notes to Queen Mab", 1813; and entire (from the Esdaile manuscript book) by Dowden, "Life of Shelley", 1887; dated 1812.)

It is not blasphemy to hope that Heaven
More perfectly will give those nameless joys
Which throb within the pulses of the blood
And sweeten all that bitterness which Earth
Infuses in the heaven-born soul. O thou
Whose dear love gleamed upon the gloomy path
Which this lone spirit travelled, drear and cold,
Yet swiftly leading to those awful limits
Which mark the bounds of Time and of the space
When Time shall be no more; wilt thou not turn
Those spirit-beaming eyes and look on me,
Until I be assured that Earth is Heaven,
And Heaven is Earth? — will not thy glowing cheek,
Glowing with soft suffusion, rest on mine,
And breathe magnetic sweetness through the frame
Of my corporeal nature, through the soul
Now knit with these fine fibres? I would give
The longest and the happiest day that fate
Has marked on my existence but to feel
ONE soul-reviving kiss…O thou most dear,
'Tis an assurance that this Earth is Heaven,
And Heaven the flower of that untainted seed
Which springeth here beneath such love as ours.
Harriet! let death all mortal ties dissolve,
But ours shall not be mortal! The cold hand
Of Time may chill the love of earthly minds
Half frozen now; the frigid intercourse
Of common souls lives but a summer's day;
It dies, where it arose, upon this earth.
But ours! oh, 'tis the stretch of Fancy's hope

To portray its continuance as now,
Warm, tranquil, spirit-healing; nor when age
Has tempered these wild ecstasies, and given
A soberer tinge to the luxurious glow
Which blazing on devotion's pinnacle
Makes virtuous passion supersede the power
Of reason; nor when life's aestival sun
To deeper manhood shall have ripened me;
Nor when some years have added judgement's store
To all thy woman sweetness, all the fire
Which throbs in thine enthusiast heart; not then
Shall holy friendship (for what other name
May love like ours assume?), not even then
Shall Custom so corrupt, or the cold forms
Of this desolate world so harden us,
As when we think of the dear love that binds
Our souls in soft communion, while we know
Each other's thoughts and feelings, can we say
Unblushingly a heartless compliment,
Praise, hate, or love with the unthinking world,
Or dare to cut the unrelaxing nerve
That knits our love to virtue. Can those eyes,
Beaming with mildest radiance on my heart
To purify its purity, e'er bend
To soothe its vice or consecrate its fears?
Never, thou second Self! Is confidence
So vain in virtue that I learn to doubt
The mirror even of Truth? Dark flood of Time,
Roll as it listeth thee; I measure not
By month or moments thy ambiguous course.
Another may stand by me on thy brink,,
And watch the bubble whirled beyond his ken,
Which pauses at my feet. The sense of love,
The thirst for action, and the impassioned thought
Prolong my being; if I wake no more,
My life more actual living will contain
Than some gray veteran's of the world's cold school,

Whose listless hours unprofitably roll
By one enthusiast feeling unredeemed,
Virtue and Love! unbending Fortitude,
Freedom, Devotedness and Purity!
That life my Spirit consecrates to you.

TO A BALLOON LADEN WITH KNOWLEDGE.

(Published from the Esdaile manuscript book by Dowden, "Life of Shelley", 1887; dated August, 1812.)

Bright ball of flame that through the gloom of even
Silently takest thine aethereal way,
And with surpassing glory dimm'st each ray
Twinkling amid the dark blue depths of Heaven, —
Unlike the fire thou bearest, soon shalt thou
Fade like a meteor in surrounding gloom,
Whilst that, unquenchable, is doomed to glow
A watch-light by the patriot's lonely tomb;
A ray of courage to the oppressed and poor;
A spark, though gleaming on the hovel's hearth,
Which through the tyrant's gilded domes shall roar;
A beacon in the darkness of the Earth;
A sun which, o'er the renovated scene,
Shall dart like Truth where Falsehood yet has been.

ON LAUNCHING SOME BOTTLES FILLED WITH KNOWLEDGE INTO THE BRISTOL CHANNEL.

(Published from the Esdaile manuscript book by Dowden, "Life of Shelley", 1887; dated August, 1812.)

Vessels of heavenly medicine! may the breeze
Auspicious waft your dark green forms to shore;
Safe may ye stem the wide surrounding roar
Of the wild whirlwinds and the raging seas;
And oh! if Liberty e'er deigned to stoop
From yonder lowly throne her crownless brow,
Sure she will breathe around your emerald group
The fairest breezes of her West that blow.
Yes! she will waft ye to some freeborn soul
Whose eye-beam, kindling as it meets your freight,
Her heaven-born flame in suffering Earth will light,
Until its radiance gleams from pole to pole,
And tyrant-hearts with powerless envy burst
To see their night of ignorance dispersed.

FAREWELL TO NORTH DEVON.

(Published (from the Esdaile manuscript book) by Dowden, "Life of Shelley", 1887; dated August, 1812.)

Where man's profane and tainting hand
Nature's primaeval loveliness has marred,
And some few souls of the high bliss debarred
Which else obey her powerful command;
…mountain piles
That load in grandeur Cambria's emerald vales.

ON LEAVING LONDON FOR WALES.

(Published (from the Esdaile manuscript book) by Dowden, "Life of Shelley", 1887; dated November, 1812.)

Hail to thee, Cambria! for the unfettered wind
Which from thy wilds even now methinks I feel,
Chasing the clouds that roll in wrath behind,
And tightening the soul's laxest nerves to steel;
True mountain Liberty alone may heal
The pain which Custom's obduracies bring,
And he who dares in fancy even to steal
One draught from Snowdon's ever sacred spring
Blots out the unholiest rede of worldly witnessing.

And shall that soul, to selfish peace resigned,
So soon forget the woe its fellows share?
Can Snowdon's Lethe from the free-born mind
So soon the page of injured penury tear?
Does this fine mass of human passion dare
To sleep, unhonouring the patriot's fall,
Or life's sweet load in quietude to bear
While millions famish even in Luxury's hall,
And Tyranny, high raised, stern lowers on all?

No, Cambria! never may thy matchless vales
A heart so false to hope and virtue shield;
Nor ever may thy spirit-breathing gales
Waft freshness to the slaves who dare to yield.
For me!…the weapon that I burn to wield
I seek amid thy rocks to ruin hurled,
That Reason's flag may over Freedom's field,
Symbol of bloodless victory, wave unfurled,
A meteor-sign of love effulgent o'er the world.

…

Do thou, wild Cambria, calm each struggling thought;
Cast thy sweet veil of rocks and woods between,
That by the soul to indignation wrought
Mountains and dells be mingled with the scene;
Let me forever be what I have been,
But not forever at my needy door
Let Misery linger speechless, pale and lean;
I am the friend of the unfriended poor, —
Let me not madly stain their righteous cause in gore.

THE WANDERING JEW'S SOLILOQUY.

(Published (from the Esdaile manuscript book) by Bertram Dobell, 1887.)

Is it the Eternal Triune, is it He
Who dares arrest the wheels of destiny
And plunge me in the lowest Hell of Hells?
Will not the lightning's blast destroy my frame?
Will not steel drink the blood-life where it swells?
No — let me hie where dark Destruction dwells,
To rouse her from her deeply caverned lair,
And, taunting her cursed sluggishness to ire,
Light long Oblivion's death-torch at its flame
And calmly mount Annihilation's pyre.
Tyrant of Earth! pale Misery's jackal Thou!
Are there no stores of vengeful violent fate
Within the magazines of Thy fierce hate?
No poison in the clouds to bathe a brow
That lowers on Thee with desperate contempt?
Where is the noonday Pestilence that slew
The myriad sons of Israel's favoured nation?
Where the destroying Minister that flew
Pouring the fiery tide of desolation
Upon the leagued Assyrian's attempt?
Where the dark Earthquake-daemon who engorged
At the dread word Korah's unconscious crew?
Or the Angel's two-edged sword of fire that urged
Our primal parents from their bower of bliss
(Reared by Thine hand) for errors not their own
By Thine omniscient mind foredoomed, foreknown?
Yes! I would court a ruin such as this,
Almighty Tyrant! and give thanks to Thee —
Drink deeply — drain the cup of hate; remit this — I may die.

EVENING. TO HARRIET.

(Published by Dowden, "Life of Shelley", 1887. Composed July 31, 1813.)

O thou bright Sun! beneath the dark blue line
Of western distance that sublime descendest,
And, gleaming lovelier as thy beams decline,
Thy million hues to every vapour lendest,
And, over cobweb lawn and grove and stream
Sheddest the liquid magic of thy light,
Till calm Earth, with the parting splendour bright,
Shows like the vision of a beauteous dream;
What gazer now with astronomic eye
Could coldly count the spots within thy sphere?
Such were thy lover, Harriet, could he fly
The thoughts of all that makes his passion dear,
And, turning senseless from thy warm caress, —
Pick flaws in our close-woven happiness.

TO IANTHE.

(Published by Dowden, "Life of Shelley", 1887. Composed September, 1813.)

I love thee, Baby! for thine own sweet sake;
Those azure eyes, that faintly dimpled cheek,
Thy tender frame, so eloquently weak,
Love in the sternest heart of hate might wake;
But more when o'er thy fitful slumber bending
Thy mother folds thee to her wakeful heart,
Whilst love and pity, in her glances blending,
All that thy passive eyes can feel impart:
More, when some feeble lineaments of her,
Who bore thy weight beneath her spotless bosom,
As with deep love I read thy face, recur, —
More dear art thou, O fair and fragile blossom;
Dearest when most thy tender traits express
The image of thy mother's loveliness.

SONG FROM THE WANDERING JEW.

(Published as Shelley's by Medwin, "Life of Shelley", 1847, 1 page 58.)

See yon opening flower
Spreads its fragrance to the blast;
It fades within an hour,
Its decay is pale — is fast.
Paler is yon maiden;
Faster is her heart's decay;
Deep with sorrow laden,
She sinks in death away.

FRAGMENT FROM THE WANDERING JEW.

(Published as Shelley's by Medwin, "Life of Shelley", 1847, 1 page 56.)

The Elements respect their Maker's seal!
Still Like the scathed pine tree's height,
Braving the tempests of the night
Have I 'scaped the flickering flame.
Like the scathed pine, which a monument stands
Of faded grandeur, which the brands
Of the tempest-shaken air
Have riven on the desolate heath;
Yet it stands majestic even in death,
And rears its wild form there. 10,

TO THE QUEEN OF MY HEART.

(Published as Shelley's by Medwin, "The Shelley Papers", 1833, and by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition; afterwards suppressed as of doubtful authenticity.)

1.
Shall we roam, my love,
To the twilight grove,
When the moon is rising bright;
Oh, I'll whisper there,
In the cool night-air,
What I dare not in broad daylight!

2.
I'll tell thee a part
Of the thoughts that start
To being when thou art nigh;
And thy beauty, more bright
Than the stars' soft light,
Shall seem as a weft from the sky.

3.
When the pale moonbeam
On tower and stream
Sheds a flood of silver sheen,
How I love to gaze
As the cold ray strays
O'er thy face, my heart's throned queen!

4.
Wilt thou roam with me
To the restless sea,
And linger upon the steep,
And list to the flow
Of the waves below
How they toss and roar and leap?

5.
Those boiling waves,
And the storm that raves
At night o'er their foaming crest,
Resemble the strife
That, from earliest life,
The passions have waged in my breast.

6.
Oh, come then, and rove
To the sea or the grove,
When the moon is rising bright;
And I'll whisper there,
In the cool night-air,
What I dare not in broad daylight.

EARLY POEMS 1814-1815.

(The poems which follow appeared, with a few exceptions, either in the volumes published from time to time by Shelley himself, or in the "Posthumous Poems" of 1824, or in the "Poetical Works" of 1839, of which a second and enlarged edition was published by Mrs. Shelley in the same year. A few made their first appearance in some fugitive publication — such as Leigh Hunt's "Literary Pocket-Book" — and were subsequently incorporated in the collective editions. In every case the editio princeps and (where this is possible) the exact date of composition are indicated below the title.)

STANZA, WRITTEN AT BRACKNELL.

(Composed March, 1814. Published in Hogg's "Life of Shelley", 1858.)

Thy dewy looks sink in my breast;
Thy gentle words stir poison there;
Thou hast disturbed the only rest
That was the portion of despair!
Subdued to Duty's hard control,
I could have borne my wayward lot:
The chains that bind this ruined soul
Had cankered then — but crushed it not.

STANZAS. — APRIL, 1814.

(Composed at Bracknell, April, 1814. Published with "Alastor", 1816.)

Away! the moor is dark beneath the moon,
Rapid clouds have drank the last pale beam of even:
Away! the gathering winds will call the darkness soon,
And profoundest midnight shroud the serene lights of heaven.

Pause not! The time is past! Every voice cries, Away!
Tempt not with one last tear thy friend's ungentle mood:
Thy lover's eye, so glazed and cold, dares not entreat thy stay:
Duty and dereliction guide thee back to solitude.

Away, away! to thy sad and silent home;
Pour bitter tears on its desolated hearth;
Watch the dim shades as like ghosts they go and come,
And complicate strange webs of melancholy mirth.

The leaves of wasted autumn woods shall float around thine head:
The blooms of dewy spring shall gleam beneath thy feet:
But thy soul or this world must fade in the frost that binds the dead,
Ere midnight's frown and morning's smile, ere thou and peace may meet.

The cloud shadows of midnight possess their own repose,
For the weary winds are silent, or the moon is in the deep:
Some respite to its turbulence unresting ocean knows;
Whatever moves, or toils, or grieves, hath its appointed sleep.

Thou in the grave shalt rest — yet till the phantoms flee
Which that house and heath and garden made dear to thee erewhile,
Thy remembrance, and repentance, and deep musings are not free
From the music of two voices and the light of one sweet smile.

TO HARRIET.

(Composed May, 1814. Published (from the Esdaile manuscript) by Dowden,
"Life of Shelley", 1887.)

Thy look of love has power to calm
The stormiest passion of my soul;
Thy gentle words are drops of balm
In life's too bitter bowl;
No grief is mine, but that alone
These choicest blessings I have known.

Harriet! if all who long to live
In the warm sunshine of thine eye,
That price beyond all pain must give, —
Beneath thy scorn to die;
Then hear thy chosen own too late
His heart most worthy of thy hate.

Be thou, then, one among mankind
Whose heart is harder not for state,
Thou only virtuous, gentle, kind,
Amid a world of hate;
And by a slight endurance seal
A fellow-being's lasting weal.

For pale with anguish is his cheek,
His breath comes fast, his eyes are dim,
Thy name is struggling ere he speak,
Weak is each trembling limb;
In mercy let him not endure
The misery of a fatal cure.

Oh, trust for once no erring guide!
Bid the remorseless feeling flee;
'Tis malice, 'tis revenge, 'tis pride,

‘Tis anything but thee;
Oh, deign a nobler pride to prove,
And pity if thou canst not love.

TO MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT GODWIN.

(Composed June, 1814. Published in "Posthumous Poems", 1824.)

1.
Mine eyes were dim with tears unshed;
Yes, I was firm — thus wert not thou; —
My baffled looks did fear yet dread
To meet thy looks — I could not know
How anxiously they sought to shine
With soothing pity upon mine.

2.
To sit and curb the soul's mute rage
Which preys upon itself alone;
To curse the life which is the cage
Of fettered grief that dares not groan,
Hiding from many a careless eye
The scorned load of agony.

3.
Whilst thou alone, then not regarded,
The … thou alone should be,
To spend years thus, and be rewarded,
As thou, sweet love, requited me
When none were near — Oh! I did wake
From torture for that moment's sake.

4.
Upon my heart thy accents sweet
Of peace and pity fell like dew
On flowers half dead; — thy lips did meet
Mine tremblingly; thy dark eyes threw
Their soft persuasion on my brain,
Charming away its dream of pain.

5.
We are not happy, sweet! our state
Is strange and full of doubt and fear;
More need of words that ills abate; —
Reserve or censure come not near
Our sacred friendship, lest there be
No solace left for thee and me.

6.
Gentle and good and mild thou art,
Nor can I live if thou appear
Aught but thyself, or turn thine heart
Away from me, or stoop to wear
The mask of scorn, although it be
To hide the love thou feel'st for me.

TO — .

(Published in "Poetical Works", 1839, 2nd edition. See Editor's Note.)

Yet look on me — take not thine eyes away,
Which feed upon the love within mine own,
Which is indeed but the reflected ray
Of thine own beauty from my spirit thrown.
Yet speak to me — thy voice is as the tone
Of my heart's echo, and I think I hear
That thou yet lovest me; yet thou alone
Like one before a mirror, without care
Of aught but thine own features, imaged there;

And yet I wear out life in watching thee;
A toil so sweet at times, and thou indeed
Art kind when I am sick, and pity me…

MUTABILITY.

(Published with "Alastor", 1816.)

We are as clouds that veil the midnight moon;
How restlessly they speed, and gleam, and quiver,
Streaking the darkness radiantly! — yet soon
Night closes round, and they are lost for ever:

Or like forgotten lyres, whose dissonant strings
Give various response to each varying blast,
To whose frail frame no second motion brings
One mood or modulation like the last.

We rest. — A dream has power to poison sleep;
We rise. — One wandering thought pollutes the day;
We feel, conceive or reason, laugh or weep;
Embrace fond woe, or cast our cares away:

It is the same! — For, be it joy or sorrow,
The path of its departure still is free:
Man's yesterday may ne'er be like his morrow;
Nought may endure but Mutability.

ON DEATH.

(For the date of composition see Editor's Note.
Published with "Alastor", 1816.)

THERE IS NO WORK, NOR DEVICE, NOR KNOWLEDGE, NOR WISDOM,
IN THE GRAVE, WHITHER THOU GOEST. — Ecclesiastes.

The pale, the cold, and the moony smile
Which the meteor beam of a starless night
Sheds on a lonely and sea-girt isle,
Ere the dawning of morn's undoubted light,
Is the flame of life so fickle and wan
That flits round our steps till their strength is gone.

O man! hold thee on in courage of soul
Through the stormy shades of thy worldly way,
And the billows of cloud that around thee roll
Shall sleep in the light of a wondrous day,
Where Hell and Heaven shall leave thee free
To the universe of destiny.

This world is the nurse of all we know,
This world is the mother of all we feel,
And the coming of death is a fearful blow
To a brain unencompassed with nerves of steel;
When all that we know, or feel, or see,
Shall pass like an unreal mystery.

The secret things of the grave are there,
Where all but this frame must surely be,
Though the fine-wrought eye and the wondrous ear
No longer will live to hear or to see
All that is great and all that is strange
In the boundless realm of unending change.

Who telleth a tale of unspeaking death?
Who lifteth the veil of what is to come?
Who painteth the shadows that are beneath
The wide-winding caves of the peopled tomb?
Or uniteth the hopes of what shall be
With the fears and the love for that which we see?

A SUMMER EVENING CHURCHYARD.

LECHLADE, GLOUCESTERSHIRE.

(Composed September, 1815. Published with "Alastor", 1816.)

The wind has swept from the wide atmosphere
Each vapour that obscured the sunset's ray;
And pallid Evening twines its beaming hair
In duskier braids around the languid eyes of Day:
Silence and Twilight, unbeloved of men,
Creep hand in hand from yon obscurest glen.

They breathe their spells towards the departing day,
Encompassing the earth, air, stars, and sea;
Light, sound, and motion own the potent sway,
Responding to the charm with its own mystery.
The winds are still, or the dry church-tower grass
Knows not their gentle motions as they pass.

Thou too, aereal Pile! whose pinnacles
Point from one shrine like pyramids of fire,
Obeyest in silence their sweet solemn spells,
Clothing in hues of heaven thy dim and distant spire,
Around whose lessening and invisible height
Gather among the stars the clouds of night.

The dead are sleeping in their sepulchres:
And, mouldering as they sleep, a thrilling sound,
Half sense, half thought, among the darkness stirs,
Breathed from their wormy beds all living things around,
And mingling with the still night and mute sky
Its awful hush is felt inaudibly.

Thus solemnized and softened, death is mild
And terrorless as this serenest night:
Here could I hope, like some inquiring child
Sporting on graves, that death did hide from human sight

Sweet secrets, or beside its breathless sleep
That loveliest dreams perpetual watch did keep.

TO — .

(Published with "Alastor", 1816. See Editor's Note.)

DAKRTSI DIOISO POTMON ‘APOTMON.

Oh! there are spirits of the air,
And genii of the evening breeze,
And gentle ghosts, with eyes as fair
As star-beams among twilight trees: —
Such lovely ministers to meet
Oft hast thou turned from men thy lonely feet.

With mountain winds, and babbling springs,
And moonlight seas, that are the voice
Of these inexplicable things,
Thou didst hold commune, and rejoice
When they did answer thee; but they
Cast, like a worthless boon, thy love away.

And thou hast sought in starry eyes
Beams that were never meant for thine,
Another’s wealth: — tame sacrifice
To a fond faith! still dost thou pine?
Still dost thou hope that greeting hands,
Voice, looks, or lips, may answer thy demands?

Ah! wherefore didst thou build thine hope
On the false earth’s inconstancy?
Did thine own mind afford no scope
Of love, or moving thoughts to thee?
That natural scenes or human smiles
Could steal the power to wind thee in their wiles?

Yes, all the faithless smiles are fled
Whose falsehood left thee broken-hearted;
The glory of the moon is dead;
Night’s ghosts and dreams have now departed;
Thine own soul still is true to thee,
But changed to a foul fiend through misery.

This fiend, whose ghastly presence ever
Beside thee like thy shadow hangs,
Dream not to chase; — the mad endeavour
Would scourge thee to severer pangs.
Be as thou art. Thy settled fate,
Dark as it is, all change would aggravate.

TO WORDSWORTH.

(Published with "Alastor", 1816.)

Poet of Nature, thou hast wept to know
That things depart which never may return:
Childhood and youth, friendship and love's first glow,
Have fled like sweet dreams, leaving thee to mourn.
These common woes I feel. One loss is mine
Which thou too feel'st, yet I alone deplore.
Thou wert as a lone star, whose light did shine
On some frail bark in winter's midnight roar:
Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood
Above the blind and battling multitude:
In honoured poverty thy voice did weave
Songs consecrate to truth and liberty, —
Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,
Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to be.

FEELINGS OF A REPUBLICAN ON THE FALL OF BONAPARTE.

(Published with "Alastor", 1816.)

I hated thee, fallen tyrant! I did groan
To think that a most unambitious slave,
Like thou, shouldst dance and revel on the grave
Of Liberty. Thou mightst have built thy throne
Where it had stood even now: thou didst prefer
A frail and bloody pomp which Time has swept
In fragments towards Oblivion. Massacre,
For this I prayed, would on thy sleep have crept,
Treason and Slavery, Rapine, Fear, and Lust,
And stifled thee, their minister. I know
Too late, since thou and France are in the dust,
That Virtue owns a more eternal foe
Than Force or Fraud: old Custom, legal Crime,
And bloody Faith the foulest birth of Time.

LINES.

(Published in Hunt's "Literary Pocket-Book", 1823, where it is headed "November, 1815". Reprinted in the "Posthumous Poems", 1824. See Editor's Note.)

1.
The cold earth slept below,
Above the cold sky shone;
And all around, with a chilling sound,
From caves of ice and fields of snow,
The breath of night like death did flow
Beneath the sinking moon.

2.
The wintry hedge was black,
The green grass was not seen,
The birds did rest on the bare thorn's breast,
Whose roots, beside the pathway track,
Had bound their folds o'er many a crack
Which the frost had made between.

3.
Thine eyes glowed in the glare
Of the moon's dying light;
As a fen-fire's beam on a sluggish stream
Gleams dimly, so the moon shone there,
And it yellowed the strings of thy raven hair,
That shook in the wind of night.

4.
The moon made thy lips pale, beloved —
The wind made thy bosom chill —
The night did shed on thy dear head
Its frozen dew, and thou didst lie
Where the bitter breath of the naked sky
Might visit thee at will.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1816.

THE SUNSET.

(Written at Bishopsgate, 1816 (spring). Published in full in the "Posthumous Poems", 1824. Lines 9-20, and 28-42, appeared in Hunt's "Literary Pocket-Book", 1823, under the titles, respectively, of "Sunset. From an Unpublished Poem", And "Grief. A Fragment".)

There late was One within whose subtle being,
As light and wind within some delicate cloud
That fades amid the blue noon's burning sky,
Genius and death contended. None may know
The sweetness of the joy which made his breath
Fail, like the trances of the summer air,
When, with the Lady of his love, who then
First knew the unreserve of mingled being,
He walked along the pathway of a field
Which to the east a hoar wood shadowed o'er,
But to the west was open to the sky.
There now the sun had sunk, but lines of gold
Hung on the ashen clouds, and on the points
Of the far level grass and nodding flowers
And the old dandelion's hoary beard,
And, mingled with the shades of twilight, lay
On the brown massy woods — and in the east
The broad and burning moon lingeringly rose
Between the black trunks of the crowded trees,
While the faint stars were gathering overhead. —
'Is it not strange, Isabel,' said the youth,
'I never saw the sun? We will walk here
To-morrow; thou shalt look on it with me.'

That night the youth and lady mingled lay
In love and sleep — but when the morning came
The lady found her lover dead and cold.
Let none believe that God in mercy gave
That stroke. The lady died not, nor grew wild,

But year by year lived on — in truth I think
Her gentleness and patience and sad smiles,
And that she did not die, but lived to tend
Her aged father, were a kind of madness,
If madness ‘tis to be unlike the world.
For but to see her were to read the tale
Woven by some subtlest bard, to make hard hearts
Dissolve away in wisdom-working grief; —
Her eyes were black and lustreless and wan:
Her eyelashes were worn away with tears,
Her lips and cheeks were like things dead — so pale;
Her hands were thin, and through their wandering veins
And weak articulations might be seen
Day’s ruddy light. The tomb of thy dead self
Which one vexed ghost inhabits, night and day,
Is all, lost child, that now remains of thee!

‘Inheritor of more than earth can give,
Passionless calm and silence unreproved,
Whether the dead find, oh, not sleep! but rest,
And are the uncomplaining things they seem,
Or live, or drop in the deep sea of Love;
Oh, that like thine, mine epitaph were — Peace!’
This was the only moan she ever made.

HYMN TO INTELLECTUAL BEAUTY.

(Composed, probably, in Switzerland, in the summer of 1816. Published in Hunt's "Examiner", January 19, 1817, and with "Rosalind and Helen", 1819.)

1.
The awful shadow of some unseen Power
Floats though unseen among us, — visiting
This various world with as inconstant wing
As summer winds that creep from flower to flower, —
Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain shower,
It visits with inconstant glance
Each human heart and countenance;
Like hues and harmonies of evening, —
Like clouds in starlight widely spread, —
Like memory of music fled, —
Like aught that for its grace may be
Dear, and yet dearer for its mystery.

2.
Spirit of BEAUTY, that dost consecrate
With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon
Of human thought or form, — where art thou gone?
Why dost thou pass away and leave our state,
This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate?
Ask why the sunlight not for ever
Weaves rainbows o'er yon mountain-river,
Why aught should fail and fade that once is shown,
Why fear and dream and death and birth
Cast on the daylight of this earth
Such gloom, — why man has such a scope
For love and hate, despondency and hope?

3.
No voice from some sublimer world hath ever

To sage or poet these responses given —
Therefore the names of Demon, Ghost, and Heaven.
Remain the records of their vain endeavour,
Frail spells — whose uttered charm might not avail to sever,
From all we hear and all we see,
Doubt, chance, and mutability.
Thy light alone — like mist o'er mountains driven,
Or music by the night-wind sent
Through strings of some still instrument,
Or moonlight on a midnight stream,
Gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream.

4.
Love, Hope, and Self-esteem, like clouds depart
And come, for some uncertain moments lent.
Man were immortal, and omnipotent,
Didst thou, unknown and awful as thou art,
Keep with thy glorious train firm state within his heart.
Thou messenger of sympathies,
That wax and wane in lovers' eyes —
Thou — that to human thought art nourishment,
Like darkness to a dying flame!
Depart not as thy shadow came
Depart not — lest the grave should be,
Like life and fear, a dark reality.

5.
While yet a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped
Through many a listening chamber, cave and ruin,
And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing
Hopes of high talk with the departed dead.
I called on poisonous names with which our youth is fed;
I was not heard — I saw them not —
When musing deeply on the lot
Of life, at that sweet time when winds are wooing
All vital things that wake to bring
News of birds and blossoming, —

Sudden, thy shadow fell on me;
I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstasy!

6.
I vowed that I would dedicate my powers
To thee and thine — have I not kept the vow?
With beating heart and streaming eyes, even now
I call the phantoms of a thousand hours
Each from his voiceless grave: they have in visioned bowers
Of studious zeal or love's delight
Outwatched with me the envious night —
They know that never joy illumed my brow
Unlinked with hope that thou wouldst free
This world from its dark slavery,
That thou — O awful LOVELINESS,
Wouldst give whate'er these words cannot express.

7.
The day becomes more solemn and serene
When noon is past — there is a harmony
In autumn, and a lustre in its sky,
Which through the summer is not heard or seen,
As if it could not be, as if it had not been!
Thus let thy power, which like the truth
Of nature on my passive youth
Descended, to my onward life supply
Its calm — to one who worships thee,
And every form containing thee,
Whom, SPIRIT fair, thy spells did bind
To fear himself, and love all human kind.

MONT BLANC.

LINES WRITTEN IN THE VALE OF CHAMOUNI.

(Composed in Switzerland, July, 1816 (see date below). Printed at the end of the "History of a Six Weeks' Tour" published by Shelley in 1817, and reprinted with "Posthumous Poems", 1824. Amongst the Boscombe manuscripts is a draft of this Ode, mainly in pencil, which has been collated by Dr. Garnett.)

1.
The everlasting universe of things
Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves,
Now dark — now glittering — now reflecting gloom —
Now lending splendour, where from secret springs
The source of human thought its tribute brings
Of waters, — with a sound but half its own,
Such as a feeble brook will oft assume
In the wild woods, among the mountains lone,
Where waterfalls around it leap for ever,
Where woods and winds contend, and a vast river
Over its rocks ceaselessly bursts and raves.

2.
Thus thou, Ravine of Arve — dark, deep Ravine —
Thou many-coloured, many-voiced vale,
Over whose pines, and crags, and caverns sail
Fast cloud-shadows and sunbeams: awful scene,
Where Power in likeness of the Arve comes down
From the ice-gulfs that gird his secret throne,
Bursting through these dark mountains like the flame
Of lightning through the tempest; — thou dost lie,
Thy giant brood of pines around thee clinging,
Children of elder time, in whose devotion
The chainless winds still come and ever came
To drink their odours, and their mighty swinging
To hear — an old and solemn harmony;
Thine earthly rainbows stretched across the sweep

Of the ethereal waterfall, whose veil
Robes some unsculptured image; the strange sleep
Which when the voices of the desert fail
Wraps all in its own deep eternity; —
Thy caverns echoing to the Arve's commotion,
A loud, lone sound no other sound can tame;
Thou art pervaded with that ceaseless motion,
Thou art the path of that unresting sound —
Dizzy Ravine! and when I gaze on thee
I seem as in a trance sublime and strange
To muse on my own separate fantasy,
My own, my human mind, which passively
Now renders and receives fast influencings,
Holding an unremitting interchange
With the clear universe of things around;
One legion of wild thoughts, whose wandering wings
Now float above thy darkness, and now rest
Where that or thou art no unbidden guest,
In the still cave of the witch Poesy,
Seeking among the shadows that pass by
Ghosts of all things that are, some shade of thee,
Some phantom, some faint image; till the breast
From which they fled recalls them, thou art there!

3.

Some say that gleams of a remoter world
Visit the soul in sleep, — that death is slumber,
And that its shapes the busy thoughts outnumber
Of those who wake and live. — I look on high;
Has some unknown omnipotence unfurled
The veil of life and death? or do I lie
In dream, and does the mightier world of sleep
Spread far around and inaccessibly
Its circles? For the very spirit fails,
Driven like a homeless cloud from steep to steep
That vanishes among the viewless gales!
Far, far above, piercing the infinite sky,

Mont Blanc appears, — still, snowy, and serene —
Its subject mountains their unearthly forms
Pile around it, ice and rock; broad vales between
Of frozen floods, unfathomable deeps,
Blue as the overhanging heaven, that spread
And wind among the accumulated steeps;
A desert peopled by the storms alone,
Save when the eagle brings some hunter's bone,
And the wolf tracts her there — how hideously
Its shapes are heaped around! rude, bare, and high,
Ghastly, and scarred, and riven. — Is this the scene
Where the old Earthquake-daemon taught her young
Ruin? Were these their toys? or did a sea
Of fire envelope once this silent snow?
None can reply — all seems eternal now.
The wilderness has a mysterious tongue
Which teaches awful doubt, or faith so mild,
So solemn, so serene, that man may be,
But for such faith, with nature reconciled;
Thou hast a voice, great Mountain, to repeal
Large codes of fraud and woe; not understood
By all, but which the wise, and great, and good
Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel.

4.

The fields, the lakes, the forests, and the streams,
Ocean, and all the living things that dwell
Within the daedal earth; lightning, and rain,
Earthquake, and fiery flood, and hurricane,
The torpor of the year when feeble dreams
Visit the hidden buds, or dreamless sleep
Holds every future leaf and flower; — the bound
With which from that detested trance they leap;
The works and ways of man, their death and birth,
And that of him and all that his may be;
All things that move and breathe with toil and sound
Are born and die; revolve, subside, and swell.

Power dwells apart in its tranquillity,
Remote, serene, and inaccessible:
And THIS, the naked countenance of earth,
On which I gaze, even these primaeval mountains
Teach the adverting mind. The glaciers creep
Like snakes that watch their prey, from their far fountains,
Slow rolling on; there, many a precipice,
Frost and the Sun in scorn of mortal power
Have piled: dome, pyramid, and pinnacle,
A city of death, distinct with many a tower
And wall impregnable of beaming ice.
Yet not a city, but a flood of ruin
Is there, that from the boundaries of the sky
Rolls its perpetual stream; vast pines are strewing
Its destined path, or in the mangled soil
Branchless and shattered stand; the rocks, drawn down
From yon remotest waste, have overthrown
The limits of the dead and living world,
Never to be reclaimed. The dwelling-place
Of insects, beasts, and birds, becomes its spoil;
Their food and their retreat for ever gone,
So much of life and joy is lost. The race
Of man flies far in dread; his work and dwelling
Vanish, like smoke before the tempest's stream,
And their place is not known. Below, vast caves
Shine in the rushing torrents' restless gleam,
Which from those secret chasms in tumult welling
Meet in the vale, and one majestic River,
The breath and blood of distant lands, for ever
Rolls its loud waters to the ocean waves,
Breathes its swift vapours to the circling air.

5.
Mont Blanc yet gleams on high — the power is there,
The still and solemn power of many sights,
And many sounds, and much of life and death.
In the calm darkness of the moonless nights,

In the lone glare of day, the snows descend
Upon that Mountain; none beholds them there,
Nor when the flakes burn in the sinking sun,
Or the star-beams dart through them: — Winds contend
Silently there, and heap the snow with breath
Rapid and strong, but silently! Its home
The voiceless lightning in these solitudes
Keeps innocently, and like vapour broods
Over the snow. The secret strength of things
Which governs thought, and to the infinite dome
Of heaven is as a law, inhabits thee!
And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,
If to the human mind's imaginings
Silence and solitude were vacancy?

July 23, 1816.

CANCELLED PASSAGE OF MONT BLANC.

(Published by Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862.)

There is a voice, not understood by all,
Sent from these desert-caves. It is the roar
Of the rent ice-cliff which the sunbeams call,
Plunging into the vale — it is the blast
Descending on the pines — the torrents pour…

HOME. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862.)

Dear home, thou scene of earliest hopes and joys,
The least of which wronged Memory ever makes
Bitterer than all thine unremembered tears.

FRAGMENT OF A GHOST STORY.

(Published by Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862.)

A shovel of his ashes took
From the hearth's obscurest nook,
Muttering mysteries as she went.
Helen and Henry knew that Granny
Was as much afraid of Ghosts as any,
And so they followed hard —
But Helen clung to her brother's arm,
And her own spasm made her shake.

NOTE ON POEMS OF 1816, BY MRS. SHELLEY.

Shelley wrote little during this year. The poem entitled “The Sunset” was written in the spring of the year, while still residing at Bishopsgate. He spent the summer on the shores of the Lake of Geneva. The “Hymn to Intellectual Beauty” was conceived during his voyage round the lake with Lord Byron. He occupied himself during this voyage by reading the “Nouvelle Heloise” for the first time. The reading it on the very spot where the scenes are laid added to the interest; and he was at once surprised and charmed by the passionate eloquence and earnest enthralling interest that pervade this work. There was something in the character of Saint-Preux, in his abnegation of self, and in the worship he paid to Love, that coincided with Shelley’s own disposition; and, though differing in many of the views and shocked by others, yet the effect of the whole was fascinating and delightful.

“Mont Blanc” was inspired by a view of that mountain and its surrounding peaks and valleys, as he lingered on the Bridge of Arve on his way through the Valley of Chamouni. Shelley makes the following mention of this poem in his publication of the “History of a Six Weeks’ Tour, and Letters from Switzerland”: ‘The poem entitled “Mont Blanc” is written by the author of the two letters from Chamouni and Vevai. It was composed under the immediate impression of the deep and powerful feelings excited by the objects which it attempts to describe; and, as an undisciplined overflowing of the soul, rests its claim to approbation on an attempt to imitate the untamable wildness and inaccessible solemnity from which those feelings sprang.’

This was an eventful year, and less time was given to study than usual. In the list of his reading I find, in Greek, Theocritus, the “Prometheus” of Aeschylus, several of Plutarch’s “Lives”, and the works of Lucian. In Latin, Lucretius, Pliny’s “Letters”, the “Annals” and “Germany” of Tacitus. In French, the “History of the French Revolution” by Lacretelle. He read for the first time, this year, Montaigne’s “Essays”, and regarded them ever after as one of the most delightful and instructive books in the world. The list is scanty in English works: Locke’s “Essay”, “Political Justice”, and

Coleridge's "Lay Sermon", form nearly the whole. It was his frequent habit to read aloud to me in the evening; in this way we read, this year, the New Testament, "Paradise Lost", Spenser's "Faery Queen", and "Don Quixote".

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1817.

MARIANNE'S DREAM.

(Composed at Marlow, 1817. Published in Hunt's "Literary Pocket-Book", 1819, and reprinted in "Posthumous Poems", 1824.)

1.
A pale Dream came to a Lady fair,
And said, A boon, a boon, I pray!
I know the secrets of the air,
And things are lost in the glare of day,
Which I can make the sleeping see,
If they will put their trust in me.

2.
And thou shalt know of things unknown,
If thou wilt let me rest between
The veiny lids, whose fringe is thrown
Over thine eyes so dark and sheen:
And half in hope, and half in fright,
The Lady closed her eyes so bright.

3.
At first all deadly shapes were driven
Tumultuously across her sleep,
And o'er the vast cope of bending heaven
All ghastly-visaged clouds did sweep;
And the Lady ever looked to spy
If the golden sun shone forth on high.

4.
And as towards the east she turned,
She saw aloft in the morning air,
Which now with hues of sunrise burned,
A great black Anchor rising there;
And wherever the Lady turned her eyes,
It hung before her in the skies.

5.
The sky was blue as the summer sea,
The depths were cloudless overhead,
The air was calm as it could be,
There was no sight or sound of dread,
But that black Anchor floating still
Over the piny eastern hill.

6.
The Lady grew sick with a weight of fear
To see that Anchor ever hanging,
And veiled her eyes; she then did hear
The sound as of a dim low clanging,
And looked abroad if she might know
Was it aught else, or but the flow
Of the blood in her own veins, to and fro.

7.
There was a mist in the sunless air,
Which shook as it were with an earthquake's shock,
But the very weeds that blossomed there
Were moveless, and each mighty rock
Stood on its basis steadfastly;
The Anchor was seen no more on high.

8.
But piled around, with summits hid
In lines of cloud at intervals,
Stood many a mountain pyramid
Among whose everlasting walls
Two mighty cities shone, and ever
Through the red mist their domes did quiver.

9.
On two dread mountains, from whose crest,
Might seem, the eagle, for her brood,
Would ne'er have hung her dizzy nest,
Those tower-encircled cities stood.

A vision strange such towers to see,
Sculptured and wrought so gorgeously,
Where human art could never be.

10.
And columns framed of marble white,
And giant fanes, dome over dome
Piled, and triumphant gates, all bright
With workmanship, which could not come
From touch of mortal instrument,
Shot o'er the vales, or lustre lent
From its own shapes magnificent.

11.
But still the Lady heard that clang
Filling the wide air far away;
And still the mist whose light did hang
Among the mountains shook alway,
So that the Lady's heart beat fast,
As half in joy, and half aghast,
On those high domes her look she cast.

12.
Sudden, from out that city sprung
A light that made the earth grow red;
Two flames that each with quivering tongue
Licked its high domes, and overhead
Among those mighty towers and fanes
Dropped fire, as a volcano rains
Its sulphurous ruin on the plains.

13.
And hark! a rush as if the deep
Had burst its bonds; she looked behind
And saw over the western steep
A raging flood descend, and wind
Through that wide vale; she felt no fear,
But said within herself, 'Tis clear

These towers are Nature's own, and she
To save them has sent forth the sea.

14.
And now those raging billows came
Where that fair Lady sate, and she
Was borne towards the showering flame
By the wild waves heaped tumultuously.
And, on a little plank, the flow
Of the whirlpool bore her to and fro.

15.
The flames were fiercely vomited
From every tower and every dome,
And dreary light did widely shed
O'er that vast flood's suspended foam,
Beneath the smoke which hung its night
On the stained cope of heaven's light.

16.
The plank whereon that Lady sate
Was driven through the chasms, about and about,
Between the peaks so desolate
Of the drowning mountains, in and out,
As the thistle-beard on a whirlwind sails —
While the flood was filling those hollow vales.

17.
At last her plank an eddy crossed,
And bore her to the city's wall,
Which now the flood had reached almost;
It might the stoutest heart appal
To hear the fire roar and hiss
Through the domes of those mighty palaces.

18.
The eddy whirled her round and round
Before a gorgeous gate, which stood

Piercing the clouds of smoke which bound
Its aery arch with light like blood;
She looked on that gate of marble clear,
With wonder that extinguished fear.

19.
For it was filled with sculptures rarest,
Of forms most beautiful and strange,
Like nothing human, but the fairest
Of winged shapes, whose legions range
Throughout the sleep of those that are,
Like this same Lady, good and fair.

20.
And as she looked, still lovelier grew
Those marble forms; — the sculptor sure
Was a strong spirit, and the hue
Of his own mind did there endure
After the touch, whose power had braided
Such grace, was in some sad change faded.

21.
She looked, the flames were dim, the flood
Grew tranquil as a woodland river
Winding through hills in solitude;
Those marble shapes then seemed to quiver,
And their fair limbs to float in motion,
Like weeds unfolding in the ocean.

22.
And their lips moved; one seemed to speak,
When suddenly the mountains cracked,
And through the chasm the flood did break
With an earth-uplifting cataract:
The statues gave a joyous scream,
And on its wings the pale thin Dream
Lifted the Lady from the stream.

23.
The dizzy flight of that phantom pale
Waked the fair Lady from her sleep,
And she arose, while from the veil
Of her dark eyes the Dream did creep,
And she walked about as one who knew
That sleep has sights as clear and true
As any waking eyes can view.

TO CONSTANTIA, SINGING.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley in "Posthumous Poems", 1824. Amongst the Shelley manuscripts at the Bodleian is a chaotic first draft, from which Mr. Locock ("Examination", etc., 1903, pages 60-62) has, with patient ingenuity, disengaged a first and a second stanza consistent with the metrical scheme of stanzas 3 and 4. The two stanzas thus recovered are printed here immediately below the poem as edited by Mrs. Shelley. It need hardly be added that Mr. Locock's restored version cannot, any more than Mrs. Shelley's obviously imperfect one, be regarded in the light of a final recension.)

1.
Thus to be lost and thus to sink and die,
Perchance were death indeed! — Constantia, turn!
In thy dark eyes a power like light doth lie,
Even though the sounds which were thy voice, which burn
Between thy lips, are laid to sleep;
Within thy breath, and on thy hair, like odour, it is yet,
And from thy touch like fire doth leap.
Even while I write, my burning cheeks are wet.
Alas, that the torn heart can bleed, but not forget!

2.
A breathless awe, like the swift change
Unseen, but felt in youthful slumbers,
Wild, sweet, but uncommunicably strange,
Thou breathest now in fast ascending numbers.
The cope of heaven seems rent and cloven
By the enchantment of thy strain,
And on my shoulders wings are woven,
To follow its sublime career
Beyond the mighty moons that wane
Upon the verge of Nature's utmost sphere,
Till the world's shadowy walls are past and disappear.

3.
Her voice is hovering o’er my soul — it lingers
O’ershadowing it with soft and lulling wings,
The blood and life within those snowy fingers
Teach witchcraft to the instrumental strings.
My brain is wild, my breath comes quick —
The blood is listening in my frame,
And thronging shadows, fast and thick,
Fall on my overflowing eyes;
My heart is quivering like a flame;
As morning dew, that in the sunbeam dies,
I am dissolved in these consuming ecstasies.

4.
I have no life, Constantia, now, but thee,
Whilst, like the world-surrounding air, thy song
Flows on, and fills all things with melody. —
Now is thy voice a tempest swift and strong,
On which, like one in trance upborne,
Secure o’er rocks and waves I sweep,
Rejoicing like a cloud of morn.
Now ‘tis the breath of summer night,
Which when the starry waters sleep,
Round western isles, with incense-blossoms bright,
Lingering, suspends my soul in its voluptuous flight.

STANZAS 1 AND 2.

As restored by Mr. C.D. Locock.

1.
Cease, cease — for such wild lessons madmen learn
Thus to be lost, and thus to sink and die
Perchance were death indeed! — Constantia turn
In thy dark eyes a power like light doth lie
Even though the sounds its voice that were
Between *(thy)* lips are laid to sleep:
Within thy breath, and on thy hair
Like odour, it is *(lingering)* yet
And from thy touch like fire doth leap —
Even while I write, my burning cheeks are wet —
Alas, that the torn heart can bleed but not forget.

2.
(A deep and) breathless awe like the swift change
Of dreams unseen but felt in youthful slumbers
Wild sweet yet incommunicably strange
Thou breathest now in fast ascending numbers…

TO CONSTANTIA.

(Dated 1817 by Mrs. Shelley, and printed by her in the "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition. A copy exists amongst the Shelley manuscripts at the Bodleian. See Mr. C.D. Locock's "Examination", etc., 1903, page 46.)

1.
The rose that drinks the fountain dew
In the pleasant air of noon,
Grows pale and blue with altered hue —
In the gaze of the nightly moon;
For the planet of frost, so cold and bright,
Makes it wan with her borrowed light.

2.
Such is my heart — roses are fair,
And that at best a withered blossom;
But thy false care did idly wear
Its withered leaves in a faithless bosom;
And fed with love, like air and dew,
Its growth —

TO ONE SINGING. (FRAGMENT)

(Dated 1817 by Mrs. Shelley, and published in the "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition. The manuscript original, by which Mr. Locock has revised and (by one line) enlarged the text, is amongst the Shelley manuscripts at the Bodleian. The metre, as Mr. Locock ("Examination", etc., 1903, page 63) points out, is terza rima.)

My spirit like a charmed bark doth swim
Upon the liquid waves of thy sweet singing,
Far far away into the regions dim

Of rapture — as a boat, with swift sails winging
Its way adown some many-winding river,
Speeds through dark forests o'er the waters swinging…

A FRAGMENT: TO MUSIC. (FRAGMENT)

(Published in "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition.
Dated 1817 (Mrs. Shelley).)

Silver key of the fountain of tears,
Where the spirit drinks till the brain is wild;
Softest grave of a thousand fears,
Where their mother, Care, like a drowsy child,
Is laid asleep in flowers.

ANOTHER FRAGMENT: TO MUSIC. (FRAGMENT)

(Published in "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition.
Dated 1817 (Mrs. Shelley).)

No, Music, thou art not the 'food of Love.'
Unless Love feeds upon its own sweet self,
Till it becomes all Music murmurs of.

'

MIGHTY EAGLE’.

SUPPOSED TO BE ADDRESSED TO WILLIAM GODWIN.

(Published in 1882 ("Poetical Works of P. B. S.") by Mr. H. Buxton Forman, C.B., by whom it is dated 1817.)

Mighty eagle! thou that soarest
O'er the misty mountain forest,
And amid the light of morning
Like a cloud of glory hiest,
And when night descends defiest
The embattled tempests' warning!

TO THE LORD CHANCELLOR.

(Published in part (5-9, 14) by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition (without title); in full 2nd edition (with title). Four transcripts in Mrs. Shelley's hand are extant: two — Leigh Hunt's and Ch. Cowden Clarke's — described by Forman, and two belonging to Mr. C.W. Frederickson of Brooklyn, described by Woodberry ("Poetical Works", Centenary Edition, 3 193-6). One of the latter (here referred to as Fa) is corrected in Shelley's autograph. A much-corrected draft in Shelley's hand is in the Harvard manuscript book.)

1.
Thy country's curse is on thee, darkest crest
Of that foul, knotted, many-headed worm
Which rends our Mother's bosom — Priestly Pest!
Masked Resurrection of a buried Form!

2.
Thy country's curse is on thee! Justice sold,
Truth trampled, Nature's landmarks overthrown,
And heaps of fraud-accumulated gold,
Plead, loud as thunder, at Destruction's throne.

3.
And whilst that sure slow Angel which aye stands
Watching the beck of Mutability
Delays to execute her high commands,
And, though a nation weeps, spares thine and thee,

4.
Oh, let a father's curse be on thy soul,
And let a daughter's hope be on thy tomb;
Be both, on thy gray head, a leaden cowl
To weigh thee down to thine approaching doom.

5.
I curse thee by a parent's outraged love,

By hopes long cherished and too lately lost,
By gentle feelings thou couldst never prove,
By griefs which thy stern nature never crossed;

6.
By those infantine smiles of happy light,
Which were a fire within a stranger's hearth,
Quenched even when kindled, in untimely night
Hiding the promise of a lovely birth:

7.
By those unpractised accents of young speech,
Which he who is a father thought to frame
To gentlest lore, such as the wisest teach —
THOU strike the lyre of mind! — oh, grief and shame!

8.
By all the happy see in children's growth —
That undeveloped flower of budding years —
Sweetness and sadness interwoven both,
Source of the sweetest hopes and saddest fears-

9.
By all the days, under an hireling's care,
Of dull constraint and bitter heaviness, —
O wretched ye if ever any were, —
Sadder than orphans, yet not fatherless!

10.
By the false cant which on their innocent lips
Must hang like poison on an opening bloom,
By the dark creeds which cover with eclipse
Their pathway from the cradle to the tomb —

11.
By thy most impious Hell, and all its terror;
By all the grief, the madness, and the guilt

Of thine impostures, which must be their error —
That sand on which thy crumbling power is built —

12.
By thy complicity with lust and hate —
Thy thirst for tears — thy hunger after gold —
The ready frauds which ever on thee wait —
The servile arts in which thou hast grown old —

13.
By thy most killing sneer, and by thy smile —
By all the arts and snares of thy black den,
And — for thou canst outweep the crocodile —
By thy false tears — those millstones braining men —

14.
By all the hate which checks a father's love —
By all the scorn which kills a father's care —
By those most impious hands which dared remove
Nature's high bounds — by thee — and by despair —

15.
Yes, the despair which bids a father groan,
And cry, 'My children are no longer mine —
The blood within those veins may be mine own,
But — Tyrant — their polluted souls are thine; —

16.
I curse thee — though I hate thee not. — O slave!
If thou couldst quench the earth-consuming Hell
Of which thou art a daemon, on thy grave
This curse should be a blessing. Fare thee well!

TO WILLIAM SHELLEY.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley (1, 5, 6), "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition; in full, "Poetical Works", 1839, 2nd edition. A transcript is extant in Mrs. Shelley's hand.)

1.
The billows on the beach are leaping around it,
The bark is weak and frail,
The sea looks black, and the clouds that bound it
Darkly strew the gale.
Come with me, thou delightful child,
Come with me, though the wave is wild,
And the winds are loose, we must not stay,
Or the slaves of the law may rend thee away.

2.
They have taken thy brother and sister dear,
They have made them unfit for thee;
They have withered the smile and dried the tear
Which should have been sacred to me.
To a blighting faith and a cause of crime
They have bound them slaves in youthly prime,
And they will curse my name and thee
Because we fearless are and free.

3.
Come thou, beloved as thou art;
Another sleepeth still
Near thy sweet mother's anxious heart,
Which thou with joy shalt fill,
With fairest smiles of wonder thrown
On that which is indeed our own,
And which in distant lands will be
The dearest playmate unto thee.

4.
Fear not the tyrants will rule for ever,
Or the priests of the evil faith;
They stand on the brink of that raging river,
Whose waves they have tainted with death.
It is fed from the depth of a thousand dells,
Around them it foams and rages and swells;
And their swords and their sceptres I floating see,
Like wrecks on the surge of eternity.

5.
Rest, rest, and shriek not, thou gentle child!
The rocking of the boat thou fearest,
And the cold spray and the clamour wild? —
There, sit between us two, thou dearest —
Me and thy mother — well we know
The storm at which thou tremblest so,
With all its dark and hungry graves,
Less cruel than the savage slaves
Who hunt us o'er these sheltering waves.

6.
This hour will in thy memory
Be a dream of days forgotten long.
We soon shall dwell by the azure sea
Of serene and golden Italy,
Or Greece, the Mother of the free;
And I will teach thine infant tongue
To call upon those heroes old
In their own language, and will mould
Thy growing spirit in the flame
Of Grecian lore, that by such name
A patriot's birthright thou mayst claim!

FROM THE ORIGINAL DRAFT OF THE POEM TO WILLIAM SHELLEY.

(Published in Dr. Garnett's "Relics of Shelley", 1862.)

1.
The world is now our dwelling-place;
Where'er the earth one fading trace
Of what was great and free does keep,
That is our home!…
Mild thoughts of man's ungentle race
Shall our contented exile reap;
For who that in some happy place
His own free thoughts can freely chase
By woods and waves can clothe his face
In cynic smiles? Child! we shall weep.

2.
This lament,
The memory of thy grievous wrong
Will fade…
But genius is omnipotent
To hallow…

ON FANNY GODWIN.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, among the poems of 1817, in "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition.)

Her voice did quiver as we parted,
Yet knew I not that heart was broken
From which it came, and I departed
Heeding not the words then spoken.
Misery — O Misery,
This world is all too wide for thee.

LINES.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley with the date 'November 5th, 1817,' in "Posthumous Poems", 1824.)

1.
That time is dead for ever, child!
Drowned, frozen, dead for ever!
We look on the past
And stare aghast
At the spectres wailing, pale and ghast,
Of hopes which thou and I beguiled
To death on life's dark river.

2.
The stream we gazed on then rolled by;
Its waves are unreturning;
But we yet stand
In a lone land,
Like tombs to mark the memory
Of hopes and fears, which fade and flee
In the light of life's dim morning.

DEATH.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley in "Posthumous Poems", 1824.)

1.
They die — the dead return not — Misery
Sits near an open grave and calls them over,
A Youth with hoary hair and haggard eye —
They are the names of kindred, friend and lover,
Which he so feebly calls — they all are gone —
Fond wretch, all dead! those vacant names alone,
This most familiar scene, my pain —
These tombs — alone remain.

2.
Misery, my sweetest friend — oh, weep no more!
Thou wilt not be consoled — I wonder not!
For I have seen thee from thy dwelling's door
Watch the calm sunset with them, and this spot
Was even as bright and calm, but transitory,
And now thy hopes are gone, thy hair is hoary;
This most familiar scene, my pain —
These tombs — alone remain.

OTHO.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition.)

1.
Thou wert not, Cassius, and thou couldst not be,
Last of the Romans, though thy memory claim
From Brutus his own glory — and on thee
Rests the full splendour of his sacred fame:
Nor he who dared make the foul tyrant quail
Amid his cowering senate with thy name,
Though thou and he were great — it will avail
To thine own fame that Otho's should not fail.

2.
'Twill wrong thee not — thou wouldst, if thou couldst feel,
Abjure such envious fame — great Otho died
Like thee — he sanctified his country's steel,
At once the tyrant and tyrannicide,
In his own blood — a deed it was to bring
Tears from all men — though full of gentle pride,
Such pride as from impetuous love may spring,
That will not be refused its offering.

FRAGMENTS SUPPOSED TO BE PARTS OF OTHO.

(Published by Dr. Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862, — where, however, only the fragment numbered 2 is assigned to "Otho". Forman (1876) connects all three fragments with that projected poem.)

1.
Those whom nor power, nor lying faith, nor toil,
Nor custom, queen of many slaves, makes blind,
Have ever grieved that man should be the spoil
Of his own weakness, and with earnest mind
Fed hopes of its redemption; these recur
Chastened by deathful victory now, and find
Foundations in this foulest age, and stir
Me whom they cheer to be their minister.

2.
Dark is the realm of grief: but human things
Those may not know who cannot weep for them.

…

3.
Once more descend
The shadows of my soul upon mankind,
For to those hearts with which they never blend,
Thoughts are but shadows which the flashing mind
From the swift clouds which track its flight of fire,
Casts on the gloomy world it leaves behind.

…

‘

O THAT A CHARIOT OF CLOUD WERE MINE'.

(Published by Dr. Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862.)

O that a chariot of cloud were mine!
Of cloud which the wild tempest weaves in air,
When the moon over the ocean's line
Is spreading the locks of her bright gray hair.
O that a chariot of cloud were mine!
I would sail on the waves of the billowy wind
To the mountain peak and the rocky lake,
And the…

TO A FRIEND RELEASED FROM PRISON. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Dr. Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862.)

For me, my friend, if not that tears did tremble
In my faint eyes, and that my heart beat fast
With feelings which make rapture pain resemble,
Yet, from thy voice that falsehood starts aghast,
I thank thee — let the tyrant keep
His chains and tears, yea, let him weep
With rage to see thee freshly risen,
Like strength from slumber, from the prison,
In which he vainly hoped the soul to bind
Which on the chains must prey that fetter humankind.

SATAN BROKEN LOOSE. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1870.)

A golden-winged Angel stood
Before the Eternal Judgement-seat:
His looks were wild, and Devils' blood
Stained his dainty hands and feet.
The Father and the Son
Knew that strife was now begun.
They knew that Satan had broken his chain,
And with millions of daemons in his train,
Was ranging over the world again.
Before the Angel had told his tale,
A sweet and a creeping sound
Like the rushing of wings was heard around;
And suddenly the lamps grew pale —
The lamps, before the Archangels seven,
That burn continually in Heaven.

IGNICULUS DESIDERII. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition. This fragment is amongst the Shelley manuscripts at the Bodleian. See Mr. C.D. Locock's "Examination", etc., 1903, page 63.)

To thirst and find no fill — to wail and wander
With short unsteady steps — to pause and ponder —
To feel the blood run through the veins and tingle
Where busy thought and blind sensation mingle;
To nurse the image of unfelt caresses
Till dim imagination just possesses
The half-created shadow, then all the night
Sick…

AMOR AETERNUS. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition.)

Wealth and dominion fade into the mass
Of the great sea of human right and wrong,
When once from our possession they must pass;
But love, though misdirected, is among
The things which are immortal, and surpass
All that frail stuff which will be — or which was.

THOUGHTS COME AND GO IN SOLITUDE. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition.)

My thoughts arise and fade in solitude,
The verse that would invest them melts away
Like moonlight in the heaven of spreading day:
How beautiful they were, how firm they stood,
Flecking the starry sky like woven pearl!

A HATE-SONG.

(Published by Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1870.)

A hater he came and sat by a ditch,
And he took an old cracked lute;
And he sang a song which was more of a screech
'Gainst a woman that was a brute.

LINES TO A CRITIC.

(Published by Hunt in "The Liberal", No. 3, 1823. Reprinted in "Posthumous Poems", 1824, where it is dated December, 1817.)

1.
Honey from silkworms who can gather,
Or silk from the yellow bee?
The grass may grow in winter weather
As soon as hate in me.

2.
Hate men who cant, and men who pray,
And men who rail like thee;
An equal passion to repay
They are not coy like me.

3.
Or seek some slave of power and gold
To be thy dear heart's mate;
Thy love will move that bigot cold
Sooner than me, thy hate.

4.
A passion like the one I prove
Cannot divided be;
I hate thy want of truth and love —
How should I then hate thee?

OZYMANDIAS.

(Published by Hunt in "The Examiner", January, 1818. Reprinted with "Rosalind and Helen", 1819. There is a copy amongst the Shelley manuscripts at the Bodleian Library. See Mr. C.D. Locock's "Examination", etc., 1903.)

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert…Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:
And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1818.

TO THE NILE.

('Found by Mr. Townshend Meyer among the papers of Leigh Hunt, (and) published in the "St. James's Magazine" for March, 1876.' (Mr. H. Buxton Forman, C.B.; "Poetical Works of P. B. S.", Library Edition, 1876, volume 3 page 410.) First included among Shelley's poetical works in Mr. Forman's Library Edition, where a facsimile of the manuscript is given. Composed February 4, 1818. See "Complete Works of John Keats", edition H. Buxton Forman, Glasgow, 1901, volume 4 page 76.)

Month after month the gathered rains descend
Drenching yon secret Aethiopian dells,
And from the desert's ice-girt pinnacles
Where Frost and Heat in strange embraces blend
On Atlas, fields of moist snow half depend.
Girt there with blasts and meteors Tempest dwells
By Nile's aereal urn, with rapid spells
Urging those waters to their mighty end.
O'er Egypt's land of Memory floods are level
And they are thine, O Nile — and well thou knowest
That soul-sustaining airs and blasts of evil
And fruits and poisons spring where'er thou flowest.
Beware, O Man — for knowledge must to thee,
Like the great flood to Egypt, ever be.

PASSAGE OF THE APENNINES.

(Composed May 4, 1818. Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824. There is a copy amongst the Shelley manuscripts at the Bodleian Library, which supplies the last word of the fragment.)

Listen, listen, Mary mine,
To the whisper of the Apennine,
It bursts on the roof like the thunder's roar,
Or like the sea on a northern shore,
Heard in its raging ebb and flow
By the captives pent in the cave below.
The Apennine in the light of day
Is a mighty mountain dim and gray,
Which between the earth and sky doth lay;
But when night comes, a chaos dread
On the dim starlight then is spread,
And the Apennine walks abroad with the storm,
Shrouding…

THE PAST.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.)

1.
Wilt thou forget the happy hours
Which we buried in Love's sweet bowers,
Heaping over their corpses cold
Blossoms and leaves, instead of mould?
Blossoms which were the joys that fell,
And leaves, the hopes that yet remain.

2.
Forget the dead, the past? Oh, yet
There are ghosts that may take revenge for it,
Memories that make the heart a tomb,
Regrets which glide through the spirit's gloom,
And with ghastly whispers tell
That joy, once lost, is pain.

TO MARY — .

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.)

O Mary dear, that you were here
With your brown eyes bright and clear.
And your sweet voice, like a bird
Singing love to its lone mate
In the ivy bower disconsolate;
Voice the sweetest ever heard!
And your brow more…
Than the … sky
Of this azure Italy.
Mary dear, come to me soon,
I am not well whilst thou art far;
As sunset to the sphered moon,
As twilight to the western star,
Thou, beloved, art to me.

O Mary dear, that you were here;
The Castle echo whispers 'Here!'

ON A FADED VIOLET.

(Published by Hunt, "Literary Pocket-Book", 1821. Reprinted by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824. Again reprinted, with several variants, "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition. Our text is that of the editio princeps, 1821. A transcript is extant in a letter from Shelley to Sophia Stacey, dated March 7, 1820.)

1.
The odour from the flower is gone
Which like thy kisses breathed on me;
The colour from the flower is flown
Which glowed of thee and only thee!

2.
A shrivelled, lifeless, vacant form,
It lies on my abandoned breast,
And mocks the heart which yet is warm,
With cold and silent rest.

3.
I weep, — my tears revive it not!
I sigh, — it breathes no more on me;
Its mute and uncomplaining lot
Is such as mine should be.

LINES WRITTEN AMONG THE EUGANEAN HILLS.

OCTOBER, 1818.

(Composed at Este, October, 1818. Published with "Rosalind and Helen", 1819. Amongst the late Mr. Fredk. Locker-Lampson's collections at Rowfant there is a manuscript of the lines (167-205) on Byron, interpolated after the completion of the poem.)

Many a green isle needs must be
In the deep wide sea of Misery,
Or the mariner, worn and wan,
Never thus could voyage on —
Day and night, and night and day,
Drifting on his dreary way,
With the solid darkness black
Closing round his vessel's track:
Whilst above the sunless sky,
Big with clouds, hangs heavily,
And behind the tempest fleet
Hurries on with lightning feet,
Riving sail, and cord, and plank,
Till the ship has almost drank
Death from the o'er-brimming deep;
And sinks down, down, like that sleep
When the dreamer seems to be
Weltering through eternity;
And the dim low line before
Of a dark and distant shore
Still recedes, as ever still
Longing with divided will,
But no power to seek or shun,
He is ever drifted on
O'er the unreposing wave
To the haven of the grave.
What, if there no friends will greet;

What, if there no heart will meet
His with love's impatient beat;
Wander wheresoe'er he may,
Can he dream before that day
To find refuge from distress
In friendship's smile, in love's caress?
Then 'twill wreak him little woe
Whether such there be or no:
Senseless is the breast, and cold,
Which relenting love would fold;
Bloodless are the veins and chill
Which the pulse of pain did fill;
Every little living nerve
That from bitter words did swerve
Round the tortured lips and brow,
Are like sapless leaflets now
Frozen upon December's bough.

On the beach of a northern sea
Which tempests shake eternally,
As once the wretch there lay to sleep,
Lies a solitary heap,
One white skull and seven dry bones,
On the margin of the stones,
Where a few gray rushes stand,
Boundaries of the sea and land:
Nor is heard one voice of wail
But the sea-mews, as they sail
O'er the billows of the gale;
Or the whirlwind up and down
Howling, like a slaughtered town,
When a king in glory rides
Through the pomp of fratricides:
Those unburied bones around
There is many a mournful sound;
There is no lament for him,
Like a sunless vapour, dim,

Who once clothed with life and thought
What now moves nor murmurs not.

Ay, many flowering islands lie
In the waters of wide Agony:
To such a one this morn was led,
My bark by soft winds piloted:
'Mid the mountains Euganean
I stood listening to the paean
With which the legioned rooks did hail
The sun's uprise majestical;
Gathering round with wings all hoar,
Through the dewy mist they soar
Like gray shades, till the eastern heaven
Bursts, and then, as clouds of even,
Flecked with fire and azure, lie
In the unfathomable sky,
So their plumes of purple grain,
Starred with drops of golden rain,
Gleam above the sunlight woods,
As in silent multitudes
On the morning's fitful gale
Through the broken mist they sail,
And the vapours cloven and gleaming
Follow, down the dark steep streaming,
Till all is bright, and clear, and still,
Round the solitary hill.

Beneath is spread like a green sea
The waveless plain of Lombardy,
Bounded by the vaporous air,
Islanded by cities fair;
Underneath Day's azure eyes
Ocean's nursling, Venice lies,
A peopled labyrinth of walls,
Amphitrite's destined halls,
Which her hoary sire now paves

With his blue and beaming waves.
Lo! the sun upsprings behind,
Broad, red, radiant, half-reclined
On the level quivering line
Of the waters crystalline;
And before that chasm of light,
As within a furnace bright,
Column, tower, and dome, and spire,
Shine like obelisks of fire,
Pointing with inconstant motion
From the altar of dark ocean
To the sapphire-tinted skies;
As the flames of sacrifice
From the marble shrines did rise,
As to pierce the dome of gold
Where Apollo spoke of old.

Sun-girt City, thou hast been
Ocean's child, and then his queen;
Now is come a darker day,
And thou soon must be his prey,
If the power that raised thee here
Hallow so thy watery bier.
A less drear ruin then than now,
With thy conquest-branded brow
Stooping to the slave of slaves
From thy throne, among the waves
Wilt thou be, when the sea-mew
Flies, as once before it flew,
O'er thine isles depopulate,
And all is in its ancient state,
Save where many a palace gate
With green sea-flowers overgrown
Like a rock of Ocean's own,
Topples o'er the abandoned sea
As the tides change sullenly.
The fisher on his watery way,

Wandering at the close of day,
Will spread his sail and seize his oar
Till he pass the gloomy shore,
Lest thy dead should, from their sleep
Bursting o'er the starlight deep,
Lead a rapid masque of death
O'er the waters of his path.

Those who alone thy towers behold
Quivering through aereal gold,
As I now behold them here,
Would imagine not they were
Sepulchres, where human forms,
Like pollution-nourished worms,
To the corpse of greatness cling,
Murdered, and now mouldering:
But if Freedom should awake
In her omnipotence, and shake
From the Celtic Anarch's hold
All the keys of dungeons cold,
Where a hundred cities lie
Chained like thee, ingloriously,
Thou and all thy sister band
Might adorn this sunny land,
Twining memories of old time
With new virtues more sublime;
If not, perish thou and they! —
Clouds which stain truth's rising day
By her sun consumed away —
Earth can spare ye: while like flowers,
In the waste of years and hours,
From your dust new nations spring
With more kindly blossoming.

Perish — let there only be
Floating o'er thy hearthless sea
As the garment of thy sky

Clothes the world immortally,
One remembrance, more sublime
Than the tattered pall of time,
Which scarce hides thy visage wan; —
That a tempest-cleaving Swan
Of the songs of Albion,
Driven from his ancestral streams
By the might of evil dreams,
Found a nest in thee; and Ocean
Welcomed him with such emotion
That its joy grew his, and sprung
From his lips like music flung
O'er a mighty thunder-fit,
Chastening terror: — what though yet
Poesy's unfailing River,
Which through Albion winds forever
Lashing with melodious wave
Many a sacred Poet's grave,
Mourn its latest nursling fled?
What though thou with all thy dead
Scarce can for this fame repay
Aught thine own? oh, rather say
Though thy sins and slaveries foul
Overcloud a sunlike soul?
As the ghost of Homer clings
Round Scamander's wasting springs;
As divinest Shakespeare's might
Fills Avon and the world with light
Like omniscient power which he
Imaged 'mid mortality;
As the love from Petrarch's urn,
Yet amid yon hills doth burn,
A quenchless lamp by which the heart
Sees things unearthly; — so thou art,
Mighty spirit — so shall be
The City that did refuge thee.

Lo, the sun floats up the sky
Like thought-winged Liberty,
Till the universal light
Seems to level plain and height;
From the sea a mist has spread,
And the beams of morn lie dead
On the towers of Venice now,
Like its glory long ago.
By the skirts of that gray cloud
Many-domed Padua proud
Stands, a peopled solitude,
'Mid the harvest-shining plain,
Where the peasant heaps his grain
In the garner of his foe,
And the milk-white oxen slow
With the purple vintage strain,
Heaped upon the creaking wain,
That the brutal Celt may swill
Drunken sleep with savage will;
And the sickle to the sword
Lies unchanged, though many a lord,
Like a weed whose shade is poison,
Overgrows this region's foison,
Sheaves of whom are ripe to come
To destruction's harvest-home:
Men must reap the things they sow,
Force from force must ever flow,
Or worse; but 'tis a bitter woe
That love or reason cannot change
The despot's rage, the slave's revenge.

Padua, thou within whose walls
Those mute guests at festivals,
Son and Mother, Death and Sin,
Played at dice for Ezzelin,
Till Death cried, "I win, I win!"
And Sin cursed to lose the wager,

But Death promised, to assuage her,
That he would petition for
Her to be made Vice-Emperor,
When the destined years were o'er,
Over all between the Po
And the eastern Alpine snow,
Under the mighty Austrian.
Sin smiled so as Sin only can,
And since that time, ay, long before,
Both have ruled from shore to shore, —
That incestuous pair, who follow
Tyrants as the sun the swallow,
As Repentance follows Crime,
And as changes follow Time.

In thine halls the lamp of learning,
Padua, now no more is burning;
Like a meteor, whose wild way
Is lost over the grave of day,
It gleams betrayed and to betray:
Once remotest nations came
To adore that sacred flame,
When it lit not many a hearth
On this cold and gloomy earth:
Now new fires from antique light
Spring beneath the wide world's might;
But their spark lies dead in thee,
Trampled out by Tyranny.
As the Norway woodman quells,
In the depth of piny dells,
One light flame among the brakes,
While the boundless forest shakes,
And its mighty trunks are torn
By the fire thus lowly born:
The spark beneath his feet is dead,
He starts to see the flames it fed
Howling through the darkened sky

With a myriad tongues victoriously,
And sinks down in fear: so thou,
O Tyranny, beholdest now
Light around thee, and thou hearest
The loud flames ascend, and fearest:
Grovel on the earth; ay, hide
In the dust thy purple pride!

Noon descends around me now:
'Tis the noon of autumn's glow,
When a soft and purple mist
Like a vaporous amethyst,
Or an air-dissolved star
Mingling light and fragrance, far
From the curved horizon's bound
To the point of Heaven's profound,
Fills the overflowing sky;
And the plains that silent lie
Underneath, the leaves unsodden
Where the infant Frost has trodden
With his morning-winged feet,
Whose bright print is gleaming yet;
And the red and golden vines,
Piercing with their trellised lines
The rough, dark-skirted wilderness;
The dun and bladed grass no less,
Pointing from this hoary tower
In the windless air; the flower
Glimmering at my feet; the line
Of the olive-sandalled Apennine
In the south dimly islanded;
And the Alps, whose snows are spread
High between the clouds and sun;
And of living things each one;
And my spirit which so long
Darkened this swift stream of song, —
Interpenetrated lie

By the glory of the sky:
Be it love, light, harmony,
Odour, or the soul of all
Which from Heaven like dew doth fall,
Or the mind which feeds this verse
Peopling the lone universe.

Noon descends, and after noon
Autumn's evening meets me soon,
Leading the infantine moon,
And that one star, which to her
Almost seems to minister
Half the crimson light she brings
From the sunset's radiant springs:
And the soft dreams of the morn
(Which like winged winds had borne
To that silent isle, which lies
Mid remembered agonies,
The frail bark of this lone being)
Pass, to other sufferers fleeing,
And its ancient pilot, Pain,
Sits beside the helm again.

Other flowering isles must be
In the sea of Life and Agony:
Other spirits float and flee
O'er that gulf: even now, perhaps,
On some rock the wild wave wraps,
With folded wings they waiting sit
For my bark, to pilot it
To some calm and blooming cove,
Where for me, and those I love,
May a windless bower be built,
Far from passion, pain, and guilt,
In a dell mid lawny hills,
Which the wild sea-murmur fills,
And soft sunshine, and the sound

Of old forests echoing round,
And the light and smell divine
Of all flowers that breathe and shine:
We may live so happy there,
That the Spirits of the Air,
Envying us, may even entice
To our healing Paradise
The polluting multitude;
But their rage would be subdued
By that clime divine and calm,
And the winds whose wings rain balm
On the uplifted soul, and leaves
Under which the bright sea heaves;
While each breathless interval
In their whisperings musical
The inspired soul supplies
With its own deep melodies;
And the love which heals all strife
Circling, like the breath of life,
All things in that sweet abode
With its own mild brotherhood,
They, not it, would change; and soon
Every sprite beneath the moon
Would repent its envy vain,
And the earth grow young again.

SCENE FROM ‘TASSO’.

(Composed, 1818. Published by Dr. Garnett, “Relics of Shelley”, 1862.)

MADDALO, A COURTIER. MALPIGLIO, A POET. PIGNA, A MINISTER. ALBANO, AN USHER.

MADDALO:
No access to the Duke! You have not said
That the Count Maddalo would speak with him?

PIGNA:
Did you inform his Grace that Signor Pigna
Waits with state papers for his signature?

MALPIGLIO:
The Lady Leonora cannot know
That I have written a sonnet to her fame,
In which I … Venus and Adonis.
You should not take my gold and serve me not.

ALBANO:
In truth I told her, and she smiled and said,
'If I am Venus, thou, coy Poesy,
Art the Adonis whom I love, and he
The Erymanthian boar that wounded him.'
O trust to me, Signor Malpiglio,
Those nods and smiles were favours worth the zechin.

MALPIGLIO:
The words are twisted in some double sense
That I reach not: the smiles fell not on me.

PIGNA:
How are the Duke and Duchess occupied?

ALBANO:
Buried in some strange talk. The Duke was leaning,
His finger on his brow, his lips unclosed.
The Princess sate within the window-seat,
And so her face was hid; but on her knee

Her hands were clasped, veined, and pale as snow,
And quivering — young Tasso, too, was there.

MADDALO:
Thou seest on whom from thine own worshipped heaven
Thou drawest down smiles — they did not rain on thee.

MALPIGLIO:
Would they were parching lightnings for his sake
On whom they fell!

SONG FOR ‘TASSO’.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, “Posthumous Poems”, 1824.)

1.
I loved — alas! our life is love;
But when we cease to breathe and move
I do suppose love ceases too.
I thought, but not as now I do,
Keen thoughts and bright of linked lore,
Of all that men had thought before.
And all that Nature shows, and more.

2.
And still I love and still I think,
But strangely, for my heart can drink
The dregs of such despair, and live,
And love;…
And if I think, my thoughts come fast,
I mix the present with the past,
And each seems uglier than the last.

3.
Sometimes I see before me flee
A silver spirit’s form, like thee,
O Leonora, and I sit
…still watching it,
Till by the grated casement’s ledge
It fades, with such a sigh, as sedge
Breathes o’er the breezy streamlet’s edge.

INVOCATION TO MISERY.

(Published by Medwin, "The Athenaeum", September 8, 1832. Reprinted (as "Misery, a Fragment") by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition. Our text is that of 1839. A pencil copy of this poem is amongst the Shelley manuscripts at the Bodleian Library. See Mr. C.D. Locock's "Examination", etc., 1903, page 38. The readings of this copy are indicated by the letter B. in the footnotes.)

1.
Come, be happy! — sit near me,
Shadow-vested Misery:
Coy, unwilling, silent bride,
Mourning in thy robe of pride,
Desolation — deified!

2.
Come, be happy! — sit near me:
Sad as I may seem to thee,
I am happier far than thou,
Lady, whose imperial brow
Is endiademed with woe.

3.
Misery! we have known each other,
Like a sister and a brother
Living in the same lone home,
Many years — we must live some
Hours or ages yet to come.

4.
'Tis an evil lot, and yet
Let us make the best of it;
If love can live when pleasure dies,
We two will love, till in our eyes
This heart's Hell seem Paradise.

5.
Come, be happy! — lie thee down
On the fresh grass newly mown,
Where the Grasshopper doth sing
Merrily — one joyous thing
In a world of sorrowing!

6.
There our tent shall be the willow,
And mine arm shall be thy pillow;
Sounds and odours, sorrowful
Because they once were sweet, shall lull
Us to slumber, deep and dull.

7.
Ha! thy frozen pulses flutter
With a love thou darest not utter.
Thou art murmuring — thou art weeping —
Is thine icy bosom leaping
While my burning heart lies sleeping?

8.
Kiss me; — oh! thy lips are cold:
Round my neck thine arms enfold —
They are soft, but chill and dead;
And thy tears upon my head
Burn like points of frozen lead.

9.
Hasten to the bridal bed —
Underneath the grave ‘tis spread:
In darkness may our love be hid,
Oblivion be our coverlid —
We may rest, and none forbid.

10.
Clasp me till our hearts be grown
Like two shadows into one;

Till this dreadful transport may
Like a vapour fade away,
In the sleep that lasts alway.

11.
We may dream, in that long sleep,
That we are not those who weep;
E'en as Pleasure dreams of thee,
Life-deserting Misery,
Thou mayst dream of her with me.

12.
Let us laugh, and make our mirth,
At the shadows of the earth,
As dogs bay the moonlight clouds,
Which, like spectres wrapped in shrouds,
Pass o'er night in multitudes.

13.
All the wide world, beside us,
Show like multitudinous
Puppets passing from a scene;
What but mockery can they mean,
Where I am — where thou hast been?

STANZAS WRITTEN IN DEJECTION, NEAR NAPLES.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824, where it is dated 'December, 1818.' A draft of stanza 1 is amongst the Boscombe manuscripts. (Garnett).)

1.
The sun is warm, the sky is clear,
The waves are dancing fast and bright,
Blue isles and snowy mountains wear
The purple noon's transparent might,
The breath of the moist earth is light,
Around its unexpanded buds;
Like many a voice of one delight,
The winds, the birds, the ocean floods,
The City's voice itself, is soft like Solitude's.

2.
I see the Deep's untrampled floor
With green and purple seaweeds strown;
I see the waves upon the shore,
Like light dissolved in star-showers, thrown:
I sit upon the sands alone, —
The lightning of the noontide ocean
Is flashing round me, and a tone
Arises from its measured motion,
How sweet! did any heart now share in my emotion.

3.
Alas! I have nor hope nor health,
Nor peace within nor calm around,
Nor that content surpassing wealth
The sage in meditation found,
And walked with inward glory crowned —
Nor fame, nor power, nor love, nor leisure.
Others I see whom these surround —

Smiling they live, and call life pleasure; —
To me that cup has been dealt in another measure.

4.
Yet now despair itself is mild,
Even as the winds and waters are;
I could lie down like a tired child,
And weep away the life of care
Which I have borne and yet must bear,
Till death like sleep might steal on me,
And I might feel in the warm air
My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea
Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony.

5.
Some might lament that I were cold,
As I, when this sweet day is gone,
Which my lost heart, too soon grown old,
Insults with this untimely moan;
They might lament — for I am one
Whom men love not, — and yet regret,
Unlike this day, which, when the sun
Shall on its stainless glory set,
Will linger, though enjoyed, like joy in memory yet.

THE WOODMAN AND THE NIGHTINGALE.

(Published in part (1-67) by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824; the remainder (68-70) by Dr. Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862.)

A woodman whose rough heart was out of tune
(I think such hearts yet never came to good)
Hated to hear, under the stars or moon,

One nightingale in an interfluous wood
Satiate the hungry dark with melody; —
And as a vale is watered by a flood,

Or as the moonlight fills the open sky
Struggling with darkness — as a tuberose
Peoples some Indian dell with scents which lie

Like clouds above the flower from which they rose,
The singing of that happy nightingale
In this sweet forest, from the golden close

Of evening till the star of dawn may fail,
Was interfused upon the silentness;
The folded roses and the violets pale

Heard her within their slumbers, the abyss
Of heaven with all its planets; the dull ear
Of the night-cradled earth; the loneliness

Of the circumfluous waters, — every sphere
And every flower and beam and cloud and wave,
And every wind of the mute atmosphere,

And every beast stretched in its rugged cave,
And every bird lulled on its mossy bough,
And every silver moth fresh from the grave

Which is its cradle — ever from below
Aspiring like one who loves too fair, too far,
To be consumed within the purest glow

Of one serene and unapproached star,
As if it were a lamp of earthly light,
Unconscious, as some human lovers are,

Itself how low, how high beyond all height
The heaven where it would perish! — and every form
That worshipped in the temple of the night

Was awed into delight, and by the charm
Girt as with an interminable zone,
Whilst that sweet bird, whose music was a storm

Of sound, shook forth the dull oblivion
Out of their dreams; harmony became love
In every soul but one.

…

And so this man returned with axe and saw
At evening close from killing the tall treen,
The soul of whom by Nature's gentle law

Was each a wood-nymph, and kept ever green
The pavement and the roof of the wild copse,
Chequering the sunlight of the blue serene

With jagged leaves, — and from the forest tops
Singing the winds to sleep — or weeping oft
Fast showers of aereal water-drops

Into their mother's bosom, sweet and soft,
Nature's pure tears which have no bitterness; —
Around the cradles of the birds aloft

They spread themselves into the loveliness
Of fan-like leaves, and over pallid flowers
Hang like moist clouds: — or, where high branches kiss,

Make a green space among the silent bowers,
Like a vast fane in a metropolis,
Surrounded by the columns and the towers

All overwrought with branch-like traceries
In which there is religion — and the mute
Persuasion of unkindled melodies,

Odours and gleams and murmurs, which the lute
Of the blind pilot-spirit of the blast
Stirs as it sails, now grave and now acute,

Wakening the leaves and waves, ere it has passed
To such brief unison as on the brain
One tone, which never can recur, has cast,
One accent never to return again.

…

The world is full of Woodmen who expel
Love's gentle Dryads from the haunts of life,
And vex the nightingales in every dell.

MARENGHI.

(This fragment refers to an event told in Sismondi's "Histoire des Republiques Italiennes", which occurred during the war when Florence finally subdued Pisa, and reduced it to a province. —)

(Published in part (stanzas 7-15.) by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824; stanzas 1-28 by W.M. Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1870. The Boscombe manuscript — evidently a first draft — from which (through Dr. Garnett) Rossetti derived the text of 1870 is now at the Bodleian, and has recently been collated by Mr. C.D. Locock, to whom the enlarged and amended text here printed is owing. The substitution, in title and text, of "Marenghi" for "Mazenghi" (1824) is due to Rossetti. Here as elsewhere in the footnotes B. = the Bodleian manuscript.)

1.
Let those who pine in pride or in revenge,
Or think that ill for ill should be repaid,
Who barter wrong for wrong, until the exchange
Ruins the merchants of such thriftless trade,
Visit the tower of Vado, and unlearn
Such bitter faith beside Marenghi's urn.

2.
A massy tower yet overhangs the town,
A scattered group of ruined dwellings now…

…

3.
Another scene are wise Etruria knew
Its second ruin through internal strife
And tyrants through the breach of discord threw
The chain which binds and kills. As death to life,
As winter to fair flowers (though some be poison)
So Monarchy succeeds to Freedom's foison.

4.
In Pisa's church a cup of sculptured gold
Was brimming with the blood of feuds forsworn:
A Sacrament more holy ne'er of old
Etrurians mingled mid the shades forlorn
Of moon-illumined forests, when…

5.
And reconciling factions wet their lips
With that dread wine, and swear to keep each spirit
Undarkened by their country's last eclipse…

…

6.
Was Florence the liberticide? that band
Of free and glorious brothers who had planted,
Like a green isle mid Aethiopian sand,
A nation amid slaveries, disenchanted
Of many impious faiths — wise, just — do they,
Does Florence, gorge the sated tyrants' prey?

7.
O foster-nurse of man's abandoned glory,
Since Athens, its great mother, sunk in splendour;
Thou shadowest forth that mighty shape in story,
As ocean its wrecked fanes, severe yet tender: —
The light-invested angel Poesy
Was drawn from the dim world to welcome thee.

8.
And thou in painting didst transcribe all taught
By loftiest meditations; marble knew
The sculptor's fearless soul — and as he wrought,
The grace of his own power and freedom grew.
And more than all, heroic, just, sublime,
Thou wart among the false…was this thy crime?

9.
Yes; and on Pisa's marble walls the twine
Of direst weeds hangs garlanded — the snake
Inhabits its wrecked palaces; — in thine
A beast of subtler venom now doth make
Its lair, and sits amid their glories overthrown,
And thus thy victim's fate is as thine own.

10.
The sweetest flowers are ever frail and rare,
And love and freedom blossom but to wither;
And good and ill like vines entangled are,
So that their grapes may oft be plucked together; —
Divide the vintage ere thou drink, then make
Thy heart rejoice for dead Marenghi's sake.

10a.
(Albert) Marenghi was a Florentine;
If he had wealth, or children, or a wife
Or friends, *(or farm)* or cherished thoughts which twine
The sights and sounds of home with life's own life
Of these he was despoiled and Florence sent…

…

11.
No record of his crime remains in story,
But if the morning bright as evening shone,
It was some high and holy deed, by glory
Pursued into forgetfulness, which won
From the blind crowd he made secure and free
The patriot's meed, toil, death, and infamy.

12.
For when by sound of trumpet was declared
A price upon his life, and there was set
A penalty of blood on all who shared
So much of water with him as might wet

His lips, which speech divided not — he went
Alone, as you may guess, to banishment.

13.
Amid the mountains, like a hunted beast,
He hid himself, and hunger, toil, and cold,
Month after month endured; it was a feast
Whene'er he found those globes of deep-red gold
Which in the woods the strawberry-tree doth bear,
Suspended in their emerald atmosphere.

14.
And in the roofless huts of vast morasses,
Deserted by the fever-stricken serf,
All overgrown with reeds and long rank grasses,
And hillocks heaped of moss-inwoven turf,
And where the huge and speckled aloe made,
Rooted in stones, a broad and pointed shade, —

15.
He housed himself. There is a point of strand
Near Vado's tower and town; and on one side
The treacherous marsh divides it from the land,
Shadowed by pine and ilex forests wide,
And on the other, creeps eternally,
Through muddy weeds, the shallow sullen sea.

16.
Here the earth's breath is pestilence, and few
But things whose nature is at war with life —
Snakes and ill worms — endure its mortal dew.
The trophies of the clime's victorious strife —
And ringed horns which the buffalo did wear,
And the wolf's dark gray scalp who tracked him there.

17.
And at the utmost point…stood there
The relics of a reed-inwoven cot,

Thatched with broad flags. An outlawed murderer
Had lived seven days there: the pursuit was hot
When he was cold. The birds that were his grave
Fell dead after their feast in Vado's wave.

18.
There must have burned within Marenghi's breast
That fire, more warm and bright than life and hope,
(Which to the martyr makes his dungeon…
More joyous than free heaven's majestic cope
To his oppressor), warring with decay, —
Or he could ne'er have lived years, day by day.

19.
Nor was his state so lone as you might think.
He had tamed every newt and snake and toad,
And every seagull which sailed down to drink
Those freshes ere the death-mist went abroad.
And each one, with peculiar talk and play,
Wiled, not untaught, his silent time away.

20.
And the marsh-meteors, like tame beasts, at night
Came licking with blue tongues his veined feet;
And he would watch them, as, like spirits bright,
In many entangled figures quaint and sweet
To some enchanted music they would dance —
Until they vanished at the first moon-glance.

21.
He mocked the stars by grouping on each weed
The summer dew-globes in the golden dawn;
And, ere the hoar-frost languished, he could read
Its pictured path, as on bare spots of lawn
Its delicate brief touch in silver weaves
The likeness of the wood's remembered leaves.

22.
And many a fresh Spring morn would he awaken —
While yet the unrisen sun made glow, like iron
Quivering in crimson fire, the peaks unshaken
Of mountains and blue isles which did environ
With air-clad crags that plain of land and sea, —
And feel … liberty.

23.
And in the moonless nights when the dun ocean
Heaved underneath wide heaven, star-impearled,
Starting from dreams…
Communed with the immeasurable world;
And felt his life beyond his limbs dilated,
Till his mind grew like that it contemplated.

24.
His food was the wild fig and strawberry;
The milky pine-nuts which the autumn-blast
Shakes into the tall grass; or such small fry
As from the sea by winter-storms are cast;
And the coarse bulbs of iris-flowers he found
Knotted in clumps under the spongy ground.

25.
And so were kindled powers and thoughts which made
His solitude less dark. When memory came
(For years gone by leave each a deepening shade),
His spirit basked in its internal flame, —
As, when the black storm hurries round at night,
The fisher basks beside his red firelight.

26.
Yet human hopes and cares and faiths and errors,
Like billows unawakened by the wind,
Slept in Marenghi still; but that all terrors,
Weakness, and doubt, had withered in his mind.
His couch…

…

27.
And, when he saw beneath the sunset's planet
A black ship walk over the crimson ocean, —
Its pennon streaming on the blasts that fan it,
Its sails and ropes all tense and without motion,
Like the dark ghost of the unburied even
Striding athwart the orange-coloured heaven, —

28.
The thought of his own kind who made the soul
Which sped that winged shape through night and day, —
The thought of his own country…

SONNET.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.
Our text is that of the "Poetical Works", 1839.)

Lift not the painted veil which those who live
Call Life: though unreal shapes be pictured there,
And it but mimic all we would believe
With colours idly spread, — behind, lurk Fear
And Hope, twin Destinies; who ever weave
Their shadows, o'er the chasm, sightless and drear.
I knew one who had lifted it — he sought,
For his lost heart was tender, things to love
But found them not, alas! nor was there aught
The world contains, the which he could approve.
Through the unheeding many he did move,
A splendour among shadows, a bright blot
Upon this gloomy scene, a Spirit that strove
For truth, and like the Preacher found it not.

TO BYRON. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Dr. Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862.)

O mighty mind, in whose deep stream this age
Shakes like a reed in the unheeding storm,
Why dost thou curb not thine own sacred rage?

APOSTROPHE TO SILENCE. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Dr. Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862. A transcript by Mrs. Shelley, given to Charles Cowden Clarke, presents one or two variants.)

Silence! Oh, well are Death and Sleep and Thou
Three brethren named, the guardians gloomy-winged
Of one abyss, where life, and truth, and joy
Are swallowed up — yet spare me, Spirit, pity me,
Until the sounds I hear become my soul,
And it has left these faint and weary limbs,
To track along the lapses of the air
This wandering melody until it rests
Among lone mountains in some…

THE LAKE'S MARGIN. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by W.M. Rossetti, 1870.)

The fierce beasts of the woods and wildernesses
Track not the steps of him who drinks of it;
For the light breezes, which for ever fleet
Around its margin, heap the sand thereon.

MY HEAD IS WILD WITH WEEPING. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by W.M. Rossetti, 1870.)

My head is wild with weeping for a grief
Which is the shadow of a gentle mind.
I walk into the air (but no relief
To seek, — or haply, if I sought, to find;
It came unsought); — to wonder that a chief
Among men's spirits should be cold and blind.

THE VINE-SHROUD. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by W.M. Rossetti, 1870.)

Flourishing vine, whose kindling clusters glow
Beneath the autumnal sun, none taste of thee;
For thou dost shroud a ruin, and below
The rotting bones of dead antiquity.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1819.

LINES WRITTEN DURING THE CASTLEREAGH ADMINISTRATION.

(Published by Medwin, "The Athenaeum", December 8, 1832; reprinted, "Poetical Works", 1839. There is a transcript amongst the Harvard manuscripts, and another in the possession of Mr. C.W. Frederickson of Brooklyn. Variants from these two sources are given by Professor Woodberry, "Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.", Centenary Edition, 1893, volume 3 pages 225, 226. The transcripts are referred to in our footnotes as Harvard and Fred. respectively.)

1.
Corpses are cold in the tomb;
Stones on the pavement are dumb;
Abortions are dead in the womb,
And their mothers look pale — like the death-white shore
Of Albion, free no more.

2.
Her sons are as stones in the way —
They are masses of senseless clay —
They are trodden, and move not away, —
The abortion with which SHE travaileth
Is Liberty, smitten to death.

3.
Then trample and dance, thou Oppressor!
For thy victim is no redresser;
Thou art sole lord and possessor
Of her corpses, and clods, and abortions — they pave
Thy path to the grave.

4.
Hearest thou the festival din
Of Death, and Destruction, and Sin,
And Wealth crying "Havoc!" within?

‘Tis the bacchanal triumph that makes Truth dumb,
Thine Epithalamium.

5.
Ay, marry thy ghastly wife!
Let Fear and Disquiet and Strife
Spread thy couch in the chamber of Life!
Marry Ruin, thou Tyrant! and Hell be thy guide
To the bed of the bride!

SONG TO THE MEN OF ENGLAND.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition.)

1.
Men of England, wherefore plough
For the lords who lay ye low?
Wherefore weave with toil and care
The rich robes your tyrants wear?

2.
Wherefore feed, and clothe, and save,
From the cradle to the grave,
Those ungrateful drones who would
Drain your sweat — nay, drink your blood?

3.
Wherefore, Bees of England, forge
Many a weapon, chain, and scourge,
That these stingless drones may spoil
The forced produce of your toil?

4.
Have ye leisure, comfort, calm,
Shelter, food, love's gentle balm?
Or what is it ye buy so dear
With your pain and with your fear?

5.
The seed ye sow, another reaps;
The wealth ye find, another keeps;
The robes ye weave, another wears;
The arms ye forge; another bears.

6.
Sow seed, — but let no tyrant reap;
Find wealth, — let no impostor heap;

Weave robes, — let not the idle wear;
Forge arms, — in your defence to bear.

7.
Shrink to your cellars, holes, and cells;
In halls ye deck another dwells.
Why shake the chains ye wrought? Ye see
The steel ye tempered glance on ye.

8.
With plough and spade, and hoe and loom,
Trace your grave, and build your tomb,
And weave your winding-sheet, till fair
England be your sepulchre.

SIMILES FOR TWO POLITICAL CHARACTERS OF 1819.

(Published by Medwin, "The Athenaeum", August 25, 1832; reprinted by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839. Our title is that of 1839, 2nd edition. The poem is found amongst the Harvard manuscripts, headed "To S — th and O — gh".)

1.
As from an ancestral oak
Two empty ravens sound their clarion,
Yell by yell, and croak by croak,
When they scent the noonday smoke
Of fresh human carrion: —

2.
As two gibbering night-birds flit
From their bowers of deadly yew
Through the night to frighten it,
When the moon is in a fit,
And the stars are none, or few: —

3.
As a shark and dog-fish wait
Under an Atlantic isle,
For the negro-ship, whose freight
Is the theme of their debate,
Wrinkling their red gills the while —

4.
Are ye, two vultures sick for battle,
Two scorpions under one wet stone,
Two bloodless wolves whose dry throats rattle,
Two crows perched on the murrained cattle,
Two vipers tangled into one.

**

TO THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Dr. Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862.)

People of England, ye who toil and groan,
Who reap the harvests which are not your own,
Who weave the clothes which your oppressors wear,
And for your own take the inclement air;
Who build warm houses…
And are like gods who give them all they have,
And nurse them from the cradle to the grave…

…

WHAT MEN GAIN FAIRLY. (FRAGMENT)

(Perhaps connected with that immediately preceding (Forman). — ED.)

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 2nd edition.)

What men gain fairly — that they should possess,
And children may inherit idleness,
From him who earns it — This is understood;
Private injustice may be general good.
But he who gains by base and armed wrong,
Or guilty fraud, or base compliances,
May be despoiled; even as a stolen dress
Is stripped from a convicted thief; and he
Left in the nakedness of infamy.

A NEW NATIONAL ANTHEM.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 2nd edition.)

1.
God prosper, speed,and save,
God raise from England's grave
Her murdered Queen!
Pave with swift victory
The steps of Liberty,
Whom Britons own to be
Immortal Queen.

2.
See, she comes throned on high,
On swift Eternity!
God save the Queen!
Millions on millions wait,
Firm, rapid, and elate,
On her majestic state!
God save the Queen!

3.
She is Thine own pure soul
Moulding the mighty whole, —
God save the Queen!
She is Thine own deep love
Rained down from Heaven above, —
Wherever she rest or move,
God save our Queen!

4.
'Wilder her enemies
In their own dark disguise, —
God save our Queen!
All earthly things that dare
Her sacred name to bear,

Strip them, as kings are, bare;
God save the Queen!

5.
Be her eternal throne
Built in our hearts alone —
God save the Queen!
Let the oppressor hold
Canopied seats of gold;
She sits enthroned of old
O'er our hearts Queen.

6.
Lips touched by seraphim
Breathe out the choral hymn
'God save the Queen!'
Sweet as if angels sang,
Loud as that trumpet's clang
Wakening the world's dead gang, —
God save the Queen!

SONNET: ENGLAND IN 1819.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition.)

An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying king, —
Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow
Through public scorn, — mud from a muddy spring, —
Rulers who neither see, nor feel, nor know,
But leech-like to their fainting country cling,
Till they drop, blind in blood, without a blow, —
A people starved and stabbed in the untilled field, —
An army, which liberticide and prey
Makes as a two-edged sword to all who wield, —
Golden and sanguine laws which tempt and slay;
Religion Christless, Godless — a book sealed;
A Senate, — Time's worst statute, unrepealed, —
Are graves from which a glorious Phantom may
Burst, to illumine our tempestuous day.

AN ODE, WRITTEN OCTOBER, 1819, BEFORE THE SPANIARDS HAD RECOVERED THEIR LIBERTY.

(Published with "Prometheus Unbound", 1820.)

Arise, arise, arise!
There is blood on the earth that denies ye bread;
Be your wounds like eyes
To weep for the dead, the dead, the dead.
What other grief were it just to pay?
Your sons, your wives, your brethren, were they;
Who said they were slain on the battle day?

Awaken, awaken, awaken!
The slave and the tyrant are twin-born foes;
Be the cold chains shaken
To the dust where your kindred repose, repose:
Their bones in the grave will start and move,
When they hear the voices of those they love,
Most loud in the holy combat above.

Wave, wave high the banner!
When Freedom is riding to conquest by:
Though the slaves that fan her
Be Famine and Toil, giving sigh for sigh.
And ye who attend her imperial car,
Lift not your hands in the banded war,
But in her defence whose children ye are.

Glory, glory, glory,
To those who have greatly suffered and done!
Never name in story
Was greater than that which ye shall have won.
Conquerors have conquered their foes alone,
Whose revenge, pride, and power they have overthrown
Ride ye, more victorious, over your own.

Bind, bind every brow
With crownals of violet, ivy, and pine:
Hide the blood-stains now
With hues which sweet Nature has made divine:
Green strength, azure hope, and eternity:
But let not the pansy among them be;
Ye were injured, and that means memory.

CANCELLED STANZA.

(Published in "The Times" (Rossetti).)

Gather, O gather,
Foeman and friend in love and peace!
Waves sleep together
When the blasts that called them to battle, cease.
For fangless Power grown tame and mild
Is at play with Freedom's fearless child —
The dove and the serpent reconciled!

ODE TO HEAVEN.

(Published with "Prometheus Unbound", 1820. Dated 'Florence, December, 1819' in Harvard manuscript (Woodberry). A transcript exists amongst the Shelley manuscripts at the Bodleian Library. See Mr. C.D. Locock's "Examination", etc., page 39.)

CHORUS OF SPIRITS:

FIRST SPIRIT:
Palace-roof of cloudless nights!
Paradise of golden lights!
Deep, immeasurable, vast,
Which art now, and which wert then
Of the Present and the Past,
Of the eternal Where and When,
Presence-chamber, temple, home,
Ever-canopying dome,
Of acts and ages yet to come!

Glorious shapes have life in thee,
Earth, and all earth's company;
Living globes which ever throng
Thy deep chasms and wildernesses;
And green worlds that glide along;
And swift stars with flashing tresses;
And icy moons most cold and bright,
And mighty suns beyond the night,
Atoms of intensest light.

Even thy name is as a god,
Heaven! for thou art the abode
Of that Power which is the glass
Wherein man his nature sees.
Generations as they pass
Worship thee with bended knees.
Their unremaining gods and they
Like a river roll away:
Thou remainest such — alway! —

SECOND SPIRIT:
Thou art but the mind's first chamber,
Round which its young fancies clamber,
Like weak insects in a cave,

Lighted up by stalactites;
But the portal of the grave,
Where a world of new delights
Will make thy best glories seem
But a dim and noonday gleam
From the shadow of a dream!

THIRD SPIRIT:
Peace! the abyss is wreathed with scorn
At your presumption, atom-born!
What is Heaven? and what are ye
Who its brief expanse inherit?
What are suns and spheres which flee
With the instinct of that Spirit
Of which ye are but a part?
Drops which Nature's mighty heart
Drives through thinnest veins! Depart!

What is Heaven? a globe of dew,
Filling in the morning new
Some eyed flower whose young leaves waken
On an unimagined world:
Constellated suns unshaken,
Orbits measureless, are furled
In that frail and fading sphere,
With ten millions gathered there,
To tremble, gleam, and disappear.

CANCELLED FRAGMENTS OF THE ODE TO HEAVEN.

(Published by Mr. C.D. Locock, "Examination", etc., 1903.)

The *(living frame which sustains my soul)*
Is *(sinking beneath the fierce control)*
Down through the lampless deep of song
I am drawn and driven along —

When a Nation screams aloud
Like an eagle from the cloud
When a…

…

When the night…

…

Watch the look askance and old —
See neglect, and falsehood fold…

ODE TO THE WEST WIND.

(This poem was conceived and chiefly written in a wood that skirts the Arno, near Florence, and on a day when that tempestuous wind, whose temperature is at once mild and animating, was collecting the vapours which pour down the autumnal rains. They began, as I foresaw, at sunset with a violent tempest of hail and rain, attended by that magnificent thunder and lightning peculiar to the Cisalpine regions.

The phenomenon alluded to at the conclusion of the third stanza is well known to naturalists. The vegetation at the bottom of the sea, of rivers, and of lakes, sympathizes with that of the land in the change of seasons, and is consequently influenced by the winds which announce it.)

(Published with "Prometheus Unbound", 1820.)

1.
O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh, hear!

2.
Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine aery surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh, hear!

3.
Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh, hear!

4.
If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

5.
Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!

Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O, Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

AN EXHORTATION.

(Published with "Prometheus Unbound", 1820. Dated 'Pisa, April, 1820' in Harvard manuscript (Woodberry), but assigned by Mrs. Shelley to 1819.)

Chameleons feed on light and air:
Poets' food is love and fame:
If in this wide world of care
Poets could but find the same
With as little toil as they,
Would they ever change their hue
As the light chameleons do,
Suiting it to every ray
Twenty times a day?

Poets are on this cold earth,
As chameleons might be,
Hidden from their early birth
in a cave beneath the sea;
Where light is, chameleons change:
Where love is not, poets do:
Fame is love disguised: if few
Find either, never think it strange
That poets range.

Yet dare not stain with wealth or power
A poet's free and heavenly mind:
If bright chameleons should devour
Any food but beams and wind,
They would grow as earthly soon
As their brother lizards are.
Children of a sunnier star,
Spirits from beyond the moon,
Oh, refuse the boon!

THE INDIAN SERENADE.

(Published, with the title, "Song written for an Indian Air", in "The Liberal", 2, 1822. Reprinted ("Lines to an Indian Air") by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824. The poem is included in the Harvard manuscript book, and there is a description by Robert Browning of an autograph copy presenting some variations from the text of 1824. See Leigh Hunt's "Correspondence", 2, pages 264-8.)

1.
I arise from dreams of thee
In the first sweet sleep of night,
When the winds are breathing low,
And the stars are shining bright:
I arise from dreams of thee,
And a spirit in my feet
Hath led me — who knows how?
To thy chamber window, Sweet!

2.
The wandering airs they faint
On the dark, the silent stream —
The Champak odours fail
Like sweet thoughts in a dream;
The nightingale's complaint,
It dies upon her heart; —
As I must on thine,
Oh, beloved as thou art!

3.
Oh lift me from the grass!
I die! I faint! I fail!
Let thy love in kisses rain
On my lips and eyelids pale.
My cheek is cold and white, alas!
My heart beats loud and fast; —

Oh! press it to thine own again,
Where it will break at last.

CANCELLED PASSAGE.

(Published by W.M. Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works", 1870.)

O pillow cold and wet with tears!
Thou breathest sleep no more!

TO SOPHIA (MISS STACEY).

(Published by W.M. Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works", 1870.)

1.
Thou art fair, and few are fairer
Of the Nymphs of earth or ocean;
They are robes that fit the wearer —
Those soft limbs of thine, whose motion
Ever falls and shifts and glances
As the life within them dances.

2.
Thy deep eyes, a double Planet,
Gaze the wisest into madness
With soft clear fire, — the winds that fan it
Are those thoughts of tender gladness
Which, like zephyrs on the billow,
Make thy gentle soul their pillow.

3.
If, whatever face thou paintest
In those eyes, grows pale with pleasure,
If the fainting soul is faintest
When it hears thy harp's wild measure,
Wonder not that when thou speakest
Of the weak my heart is weakest.

4.
As dew beneath the wind of morning,
As the sea which whirlwinds waken,
As the birds at thunder's warning,
As aught mute yet deeply shaken,
As one who feels an unseen spirit
Is my heart when thine is near it.

TO WILLIAM SHELLEY.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824. The fragment included in the Harvard manuscript book.)

(With what truth may I say —
Roma! Roma! Roma!
Non e piu come era prima!)

1.
My lost William, thou in whom
Some bright spirit lived, and did
That decaying robe consume
Which its lustre faintly hid, —
Here its ashes find a tomb,
But beneath this pyramid
Thou art not — if a thing divine
Like thee can die, thy funeral shrine
Is thy mother's grief and mine.

2.
Where art thou, my gentle child?
Let me think thy spirit feeds,
With its life intense and mild,
The love of living leaves and weeds
Among these tombs and ruins wild; —
Let me think that through low seeds
Of sweet flowers and sunny grass
Into their hues and scents may pass
A portion —

TO WILLIAM SHELLEY.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition.)

Thy little footsteps on the sands
Of a remote and lonely shore;
The twinkling of thine infant hands,
Where now the worm will feed no more;
Thy mingled look of love and glee
When we returned to gaze on thee —

TO MARY SHELLEY.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 2nd edition.)

My dearest Mary, wherefore hast thou gone,
And left me in this dreary world alone?
Thy form is here indeed — a lovely one —
But thou art fled, gone down the dreary road,
That leads to Sorrow's most obscure abode;
Thou sittest on the hearth of pale despair,
Where
For thine own sake I cannot follow thee.

TO MARY SHELLEY.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 2nd edition.)

The world is dreary,
And I am weary
Of wandering on without thee, Mary;
A joy was erewhile
In thy voice and thy smile,
And 'tis gone, when I should be gone too, Mary.

ON THE MEDUSA OF LEONARDO DA VINCI IN THE FLORENTINE GALLERY.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.)

1.
It lieth, gazing on the midnight sky,
Upon the cloudy mountain-peak supine;
Below, far lands are seen tremblingly;
Its horror and its beauty are divine.
Upon its lips and eyelids seems to lie
Loveliness like a shadow, from which shine,
Fiery and lurid, struggling underneath,
The agonies of anguish and of death.

2.
Yet it is less the horror than the grace
Which turns the gazer's spirit into stone,
Whereon the lineaments of that dead face
Are graven, till the characters be grown
Into itself, and thought no more can trace;
'Tis the melodious hue of beauty thrown
Athwart the darkness and the glare of pain,
Which humanize and harmonize the strain.

3.
And from its head as from one body grow,
As … grass out of a watery rock,
Hairs which are vipers, and they curl and flow
And their long tangles in each other lock,
And with unending involutions show
Their mailed radiance, as it were to mock
The torture and the death within, and saw
The solid air with many a ragged jaw.

4.
And, from a stone beside, a poisonous eft
Peeps idly into those Gorgonian eyes;
Whilst in the air a ghastly bat, bereft
Of sense, has flitted with a mad surprise
Out of the cave this hideous light had cleft,
And he comes hastening like a moth that hies
After a taper; and the midnight sky
Flares, a light more dread than obscurity.

5.
‘Tis the tempestuous loveliness of terror;
For from the serpents gleams a brazen glare
Kindled by that inextricable error,
Which makes a thrilling vapour of the air
Become a … and ever-shifting mirror
Of all the beauty and the terror there —
A woman’s countenance, with serpent-locks,
Gazing in death on Heaven from those wet rocks.

LOVE'S PHILOSOPHY.

(Published by Leigh Hunt, "The Indicator", December 22, 1819. Reprinted by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824. Included in the Harvard manuscript book, where it is headed "An Anacreontic", and dated 'January, 1820.' Written by Shelley in a copy of Hunt's "Literary Pocket-Book", 1819, and presented to Sophia Stacey, December 29, 1820.)

1.
The fountains mingle with the river
And the rivers with the Ocean,
The winds of Heaven mix for ever
With a sweet emotion;
Nothing in the world is single;
All things by a law divine
In one spirit meet and mingle.
Why not I with thine? —

2.
See the mountains kiss high Heaven
And the waves clasp one another;
No sister-flower would be forgiven
If it disdained its brother;
And the sunlight clasps the earth
And the moonbeams kiss the sea:
What is all this sweet work worth
If thou kiss not me?

FOLLOW TO THE DEEP WOOD'S WEEDS. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Dr. Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862.)

Follow to the deep wood's weeds,
Follow to the wild-briar dingle,
Where we seek to intermingle,
And the violet tells her tale
To the odour-scented gale,
For they two have enough to do
Of such work as I and you.

THE BIRTH OF PLEASURE.

(Published by Dr. Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862.)

At the creation of the Earth
Pleasure, that divinest birth,
From the soil of Heaven did rise,
Wrapped in sweet wild melodies —
Like an exhalation wreathing
To the sound of air low-breathing
Through Aeolian pines, which make
A shade and shelter to the lake
Whence it rises soft and slow;
Her life-breathing *(limbs)* did flow
In the harmony divine
Of an ever-lengthening line
Which enwrapped her perfect form
With a beauty clear and warm.

LOVE THE UNIVERSE TO-DAY. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition.)

And who feels discord now or sorrow?
Love is the universe to-day —
These are the slaves of dim to-morrow,
Darkening Life's labyrinthine way.

A GENTLE STORY OF TWO LOVERS YOUNG. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 2nd edition.)

A gentle story of two lovers young,
Who met in innocence and died in sorrow,
And of one selfish heart, whose rancour clung
Like curses on them; are ye slow to borrow
The lore of truth from such a tale?
Or in this world's deserted vale,
Do ye not see a star of gladness
Pierce the shadows of its sadness, —
When ye are cold, that love is a light sent
From Heaven, which none shall quench, to cheer the innocent?

LOVE'S TENDER ATMOSPHERE. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 2nd edition.)

There is a warm and gentle atmosphere
About the form of one we love, and thus
As in a tender mist our spirits are
Wrapped in the … of that which is to us
The health of life's own life — 5

WEDDED SOULS. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Dr. Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862.)

I am as a spirit who has dwelt
Within his heart of hearts, and I have felt
His feelings, and have thought his thoughts, and known
The inmost converse of his soul, the tone
Unheard but in the silence of his blood,
When all the pulses in their multitude
Image the trembling calm of summer seas.
I have unlocked the golden melodies
Of his deep soul, as with a master-key,
And loosened them and bathed myself therein —
Even as an eagle in a thunder-mist
Clothing his wings with lightning.

IS IT THAT IN SOME BRIGHTER SPHERE. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Dr. Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862.)

Is it that in some brighter sphere
We part from friends we meet with here?
Or do we see the Future pass
Over the Present's dusky glass?
Or what is that that makes us seem
To patch up fragments of a dream,
Part of which comes true, and part
Beats and trembles in the heart?

SUFFICIENT UNTO THE DAY. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Dr. Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862.)

Is not to-day enough? Why do I peer
Into the darkness of the day to come?
Is not to-morrow even as yesterday?
And will the day that follows change thy doom?
Few flowers grow upon thy wintry way;
And who waits for thee in that cheerless home
Whence thou hast fled, whither thou must return
Charged with the load that makes thee faint and mourn?

YE GENTLE VISITATIONS OF CALM THOUGHT. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition.)

Ye gentle visitations of calm thought —
Moods like the memories of happier earth,
Which come arrayed in thoughts of little worth,
Like stars in clouds by the weak winds enwrought, —
But that the clouds depart and stars remain,
While they remain, and ye, alas, depart!

MUSIC AND SWEET POETRY. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 2nd edition.)

How sweet it is to sit and read the tales
Of mighty poets and to hear the while
Sweet music, which when the attention fails
Fills the dim pause —

THE SEPULCHRE OF MEMORY. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition.)

And where is truth? On tombs? for such to thee
Has been my heart — and thy dead memory
Has lain from childhood, many a changeful year,
Unchangingly preserved and buried there.

WHEN A LOVER CLASPS HIS FAIREST. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 2nd edition.)

1.
When a lover clasps his fairest,
Then be our dread sport the rarest.
Their caresses were like the chaff
In the tempest, and be our laugh
His despair — her epitaph!

2.
When a mother clasps her child,
Watch till dusty Death has piled
His cold ashes on the clay;
She has loved it many a day —
She remains, — it fades away.

WAKE THE SERPENT NOT. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 2nd edition.)

Wake the serpent not — lest he
Should not know the way to go, —
Let him crawl which yet lies sleeping
Through the deep grass of the meadow!
Not a bee shall hear him creeping,
Not a may-fly shall awaken
From its cradling blue-bell shaken,
Not the starlight as he's sliding
Through the grass with silent gliding.

RAIN. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 2nd edition.)

The fitful alternations of the rain,
When the chill wind, languid as with pain
Of its own heavy moisture, here and there
Drives through the gray and beamless atmosphere.

A TALE UNTOLD. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 2nd edition.)

One sung of thee who left the tale untold,
Like the false dawns which perish in the bursting;
Like empty cups of wrought and daedal gold,
Which mock the lips with air, when they are thirsting.

TO ITALY. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Dr. Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862.)

As the sunrise to the night,
As the north wind to the clouds,
As the earthquake's fiery flight,
Ruining mountain solitudes,
Everlasting Italy,
Be those hopes and fears on thee.

WINE OF THE FAIRIES. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition.)

I am drunk with the honey wine
Of the moon-unfolded eglantine,
Which fairies catch in hyacinth bowls.
The bats, the dormice, and the moles
Sleep in the walls or under the sward
Of the desolate castle yard;
And when 'tis spilt on the summer earth
Or its fumes arise among the dew,
Their jocund dreams are full of mirth,
They gibber their joy in sleep; for few
Of the fairies bear those bowls so new!

A ROMAN'S CHAMBER. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 2nd edition.)

1.
In the cave which wild weeds cover
Wait for thine aethereal lover;
For the pallid moon is waning,
O'er the spiral cypress hanging
And the moon no cloud is staining.

2.
It was once a Roman's chamber,
Where he kept his darkest revels,
And the wild weeds twine and clamber;
It was then a chasm for devils.

ROME AND NATURE. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 2nd edition.)

Rome has fallen, ye see it lying
Heaped in undistinguished ruin:
Nature is alone undying.

VARIATION OF THE SONG OF THE MOON.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition.)

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PROMETHEUS UNBOUND", ACT 4.)

As a violet's gentle eye
Gazes on the azure sky
Until its hue grows like what it beholds;
As a gray and empty mist
Lies like solid amethyst
Over the western mountain it enfolds,
When the sunset sleeps
Upon its snow;
As a strain of sweetest sound
Wraps itself the wind around
Until the voiceless wind be music too;
As aught dark, vain, and dull,
Basking in what is beautiful,
Is full of light and love —

CANCELLED STANZA OF THE MASK OF ANARCHY.

(Published by H. Buxton Forman, "The Mask of Anarchy" ("Facsimile of Shelley's manuscript"), 1887.)

(FOR WHICH STANZAS 68, 69 HAVE BEEN SUBSTITUTED.)

From the cities where from caves,
Like the dead from putrid graves,
Troops of starvelings gliding come,
Living Tenants of a tomb.

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1820.

THE SENSITIVE PLANT.

(Composed at Pisa, early in 1820 (dated 'March, 1820,' in Harvard manuscript), and published, with "Prometheus Unbound", the same year: included in the Harvard College manuscript book. Reprinted in the "Poetical Works", 1839, both editions.)

PART 1.

A Sensitive Plant in a garden grew,
And the young winds fed it with silver dew,
And it opened its fan-like leaves to the light.
And closed them beneath the kisses of Night.

And the Spring arose on the garden fair,
Like the Spirit of Love felt everywhere;
And each flower and herb on Earth's dark breast
Rose from the dreams of its wintry rest.

But none ever trembled and panted with bliss
In the garden, the field, or the wilderness,
Like a doe in the noontide with love's sweet want,
As the companionless Sensitive Plant.

The snowdrop, and then the violet,
Arose from the ground with warm rain wet,
And their breath was mixed with fresh odour, sent
From the turf, like the voice and the instrument.

Then the pied wind-flowers and the tulip tall,
And narcissi, the fairest among them all,
Who gaze on their eyes in the stream's recess,
Till they die of their own dear loveliness;

And the Naiad-like lily of the vale,
Whom youth makes so fair and passion so pale
That the light of its tremulous bells is seen
Through their pavilions of tender green;

And the hyacinth purple, and white, and blue,
Which flung from its bells a sweet peal anew
Of music so delicate, soft, and intense,
It was felt like an odour within the sense;

And the rose like a nymph to the bath addressed,
Which unveiled the depth of her glowing breast,
Till, fold after fold, to the fainting air
The soul of her beauty and love lay bare:

And the wand-like lily, which lifted up,
As a Maenad, its moonlight-coloured cup,
Till the fiery star, which is its eye,
Gazed through clear dew on the tender sky;

And the jessamine faint, and the sweet tuberose,
The sweetest flower for scent that blows;
And all rare blossoms from every clime
Grew in that garden in perfect prime.

And on the stream whose inconstant bosom
Was pranked, under boughs of embowering blossom,
With golden and green light, slanting through
Their heaven of many a tangled hue,

Broad water-lilies lay tremulously,
And starry river-buds glimmered by,
And around them the soft stream did glide and dance
With a motion of sweet sound and radiance.

And the sinuous paths of lawn and of moss,
Which led through the garden along and across,
Some open at once to the sun and the breeze,
Some lost among bowers of blossoming trees,

Were all paved with daisies and delicate bells
As fair as the fabulous asphodels,
And flow'rets which, drooping as day drooped too,
Fell into pavilions, white, purple, and blue,
To roof the glow-worm from the evening dew.

And from this undefiled Paradise
The flowers (as an infant's awakening eyes

Smile on its mother, whose singing sweet
Can first lull, and at last must awaken it),

When Heaven's blithe winds had unfolded them,
As mine-lamps enkindle a hidden gem,
Shone smiling to Heaven, and every one
Shared joy in the light of the gentle sun;

For each one was interpenetrated
With the light and the odour its neighbour shed,
Like young lovers whom youth and love make dear
Wrapped and filled by their mutual atmosphere.

But the Sensitive Plant which could give small fruit
Of the love which it felt from the leaf to the root,
Received more than all, it loved more than ever,
Where none wanted but it, could belong to the giver, —

For the Sensitive Plant has no bright flower;
Radiance and odour are not its dower;
It loves, even like Love, its deep heart is full,
It desires what it has not, the Beautiful!

The light winds which from unsustaining wings
Shed the music of many murmurings;
The beams which dart from many a star
Of the flowers whose hues they bear afar;

The plumed insects swift and free,
Like golden boats on a sunny sea,
Laden with light and odour, which pass
Over the gleam of the living grass;

The unseen clouds of the dew, which lie
Like fire in the flowers till the sun rides high,
Then wander like spirits among the spheres,
Each cloud faint with the fragrance it bears;

The quivering vapours of dim noontide,
Which like a sea o’er the warm earth glide,
In which every sound, and odour, and beam,
Move, as reeds in a single stream;

Each and all like ministering angels were
For the Sensitive Plant sweet joy to bear,
Whilst the lagging hours of the day went by
Like windless clouds o’er a tender sky.

And when evening descended from Heaven above,
And the Earth was all rest, and the air was all love,
And delight, though less bright, was far more deep,
And the day’s veil fell from the world of sleep,

And the beasts, and the birds, and the insects were drowned
In an ocean of dreams without a sound;
Whose waves never mark, though they ever impress
The light sand which paves it, consciousness;

(Only overhead the sweet nightingale
Ever sang more sweet as the day might fail,
And snatches of its Elysian chant
Were mixed with the dreams of the Sensitive Plant); —

The Sensitive Plant was the earliest
Upgathered into the bosom of rest;
A sweet child weary of its delight,
The feeblest and yet the favourite,
Cradled within the embrace of Night.

PART 2.

There was a Power in this sweet place,
An Eve in this Eden; a ruling Grace
Which to the flowers, did they waken or dream,
Was as God is to the starry scheme.

A Lady, the wonder of her kind,
Whose form was upborne by a lovely mind
Which, dilating, had moulded her mien and motion
Like a sea-flower unfolded beneath the ocean,

Tended the garden from morn to even:
And the meteors of that sublunar Heaven,
Like the lamps of the air when Night walks forth,
Laughed round her footsteps up from the Earth!

She had no companion of mortal race,
But her tremulous breath and her flushing face
Told, whilst the morn kissed the sleep from her eyes,
That her dreams were less slumber than Paradise:

As if some bright Spirit for her sweet sake
Had deserted Heaven while the stars were awake,
As if yet around her he lingering were,
Though the veil of daylight concealed him from her.

Her step seemed to pity the grass it pressed;
You might hear by the heaving of her breast,
That the coming and going of the wind
Brought pleasure there and left passion behind.

And wherever her aery footstep trod,
Her trailing hair from the grassy sod
Erased its light vestige, with shadowy sweep,
Like a sunny storm o'er the dark green deep.

I doubt not the flowers of that garden sweet
Rejoiced in the sound of her gentle feet;
I doubt not they felt the spirit that came
From her glowing fingers through all their frame.

She sprinkled bright water from the stream
On those that were faint with the sunny beam;
And out of the cups of the heavy flowers
She emptied the rain of the thunder-showers.

She lifted their heads with her tender hands,
And sustained them with rods and osier-bands;
If the flowers had been her own infants, she
Could never have nursed them more tenderly.

And all killing insects and gnawing worms,
And things of obscene and unlovely forms,
She bore, in a basket of Indian woof,
Into the rough woods far aloof, —

In a basket, of grasses and wild-flowers full,
The freshest her gentle hands could pull
For the poor banished insects, whose intent,
Although they did ill, was innocent.

But the bee and the beamlike ephemeris
Whose path is the lightning's, and soft moths that kiss
The sweet lips of the flowers, and harm not, did she
Make her attendant angels be.

And many an antenatal tomb,
Where butterflies dream of the life to come,
She left clinging round the smooth and dark
Edge of the odorous cedar bark.

This fairest creature from earliest Spring
Thus moved through the garden ministering

Mi the sweet season of Summertide,
And ere the first leaf looked brown — she died!

PART 3.

Three days the flowers of the garden fair,
Like stars when the moon is awakened, were,
Or the waves of Baiae, ere luminous
She floats up through the smoke of Vesuvius.

And on the fourth, the Sensitive Plant
Felt the sound of the funeral chant,
And the steps of the bearers, heavy and slow,
And the sobs of the mourners, deep and low;

The weary sound and the heavy breath,
And the silent motions of passing death,
And the smell, cold, oppressive, and dank,
Sent through the pores of the coffin-plank;

The dark grass, and the flowers among the grass,
Were bright with tears as the crowd did pass;
From their sighs the wind caught a mournful tone,
And sate in the pines, and gave groan for groan.

The garden, once fair, became cold and foul,
Like the corpse of her who had been its soul,
Which at first was lovely as if in sleep,
Then slowly changed, till it grew a heap
To make men tremble who never weep.

Swift Summer into the Autumn flowed,
And frost in the mist of the morning rode,
Though the noonday sun looked clear and bright,
Mocking the spoil of the secret night.

The rose-leaves, like flakes of crimson snow,
Paved the turf and the moss below.
The lilies were drooping, and white, and wan,
Like the head and the skin of a dying man.

And Indian plants, of scent and hue
The sweetest that ever were fed on dew,
Leaf by leaf, day after day,
Were massed into the common clay.

And the leaves, brown, yellow, and gray, and red,
And white with the whiteness of what is dead,
Like troops of ghosts on the dry wind passed;
Their whistling noise made the birds aghast.

And the gusty winds waked the winged seeds,
Out of their birthplace of ugly weeds,
Till they clung round many a sweet flower's stem,
Which rotted into the earth with them.

The water-blooms under the rivulet
Fell from the stalks on which they were set;
And the eddies drove them here and there,
As the winds did those of the upper air.

Then the rain came down, and the broken stalks
Were bent and tangled across the walks;
And the leafless network of parasite bowers
Massed into ruin; and all sweet flowers.

Between the time of the wind and the snow
All loathliest weeds began to grow,
Whose coarse leaves were splashed with many a speck,
Like the water-snake's belly and the toad's back.

And thistles, and nettles, and darnels rank,
And the dock, and henbane, and hemlock dank,
Stretched out its long and hollow shank,
And stifled the air till the dead wind stank.

And plants, at whose names the verse feels loath,
Filled the place with a monstrous undergrowth,

Prickly, and pulpous, and blistering, and blue,
Livid, and starred with a lurid dew.

And agarics, and fungi, with mildew and mould
Started like mist from the wet ground cold;
Pale, fleshy, as if the decaying dead
With a spirit of growth had been animated!

Spawn, weeds, and filth, a leprous scum,
Made the running rivulet thick and dumb,
And at its outlet flags huge as stakes
Dammed it up with roots knotted like water-snakes.

And hour by hour, when the air was still,
The vapours arose which have strength to kill;
At morn they were seen, at noon they were felt,
At night they were darkness no star could melt.

And unctuous meteors from spray to spray
Crept and flitted in broad noonday
Unseen; every branch on which they alit
By a venomous blight was burned and bit.

The Sensitive Plant, like one forbid,
Wept, and the tears within each lid
Of its folded leaves, which together grew,
Were changed to a blight of frozen glue.

For the leaves soon fell, and the branches soon
By the heavy axe of the blast were hewn;
The sap shrank to the root through every pore
As blood to a heart that will beat no more.

For Winter came: the wind was his whip:
One choppy finger was on his lip:
He had torn the cataracts from the hills
And they clanked at his girdle like manacles;

His breath was a chain which without a sound
The earth, and the air, and the water bound;
He came, fiercely driven, in his chariot-throne
By the tenfold blasts of the Arctic zone.

Then the weeds which were forms of living death
Fled from the frost to the earth beneath.
Their decay and sudden flight from frost
Was but like the vanishing of a ghost!

And under the roots of the Sensitive Plant
The moles and the dormice died for want:
The birds dropped stiff from the frozen air
And were caught in the branches naked and bare.

First there came down a thawing rain
And its dull drops froze on the boughs again;
Then there steamed up a freezing dew
Which to the drops of the thaw-rain grew;

And a northern whirlwind, wandering about
Like a wolf that had smelt a dead child out,
Shook the boughs thus laden, and heavy, and stiff,
And snapped them off with his rigid griff.

When Winter had gone and Spring came back
The Sensitive Plant was a leafless wreck;
But the mandrakes, and toadstools, and docks, and darnels,
Rose like the dead from their ruined charnels.

CONCLUSION.

Whether the Sensitive Plant, or that
Which within its boughs like a Spirit sat,
Ere its outward form had known decay,
Now felt this change, I cannot say.

Whether that Lady's gentle mind,
No longer with the form combined
Which scattered love, as stars do light,
Found sadness, where it left delight,

I dare not guess; but in this life
Of error, ignorance, and strife,
Where nothing is, but all things seem,
And we the shadows of the dream,

It is a modest creed, and yet
Pleasant if one considers it,
To own that death itself must be,
Like all the rest, a mockery.

That garden sweet, that lady fair,
And all sweet shapes and odours there,
In truth have never passed away:
'Tis we, 'tis ours, are changed; not they.

For love, and beauty, and delight,
There is no death nor change: their might
Exceeds our organs, which endure
No light, being themselves obscure.

CANCELLED PASSAGE.

(This stanza followed 3, 62-65 in the editio princeps, 1820, but was omitted by Mrs. Shelley from all editions from 1839 onwards. It is cancelled in the Harvard manuscript.)

Their moss rotted off them, flake by flake,
Till the thick stalk stuck like a murderer's stake,
Where rags of loose flesh yet tremble on high,
Infecting the winds that wander by.

A VISION OF THE SEA.

(Composed at Pisa early in 1820, and published with "Prometheus Unbound" in the same year. A transcript in Mrs. Shelley's handwriting is included in the Harvard manuscript book, where it is dated 'April, 1820.')

'Tis the terror of tempest. The rags of the sail
Are flickering in ribbons within the fierce gale:
From the stark night of vapours the dim rain is driven,
And when lightning is loosed, like a deluge from Heaven,
She sees the black trunks of the waterspouts spin
And bend, as if Heaven was ruining in,
Which they seemed to sustain with their terrible mass
As if ocean had sunk from beneath them: they pass
To their graves in the deep with an earthquake of sound,
And the waves and the thunders, made silent around,
Leave the wind to its echo. The vessel, now tossed
Through the low-trailing rack of the tempest, is lost
In the skirts of the thunder-cloud: now down the sweep
Of the wind-cloven wave to the chasm of the deep
It sinks, and the walls of the watery vale
Whose depths of dread calm are unmoved by the gale,
Dim mirrors of ruin, hang gleaming about;
While the surf, like a chaos of stars, like a rout
Of death-flames, like whirlpools of fire-flowing iron,
With splendour and terror the black ship environ,
Or like sulphur-flakes hurled from a mine of pale fire
In fountains spout o'er it. In many a spire
The pyramid-billows with white points of brine
In the cope of the lightning inconstantly shine,
As piercing the sky from the floor of the sea.
The great ship seems splitting! it cracks as a tree,
While an earthquake is splintering its root, ere the blast
Of the whirlwind that stripped it of branches has passed.
The intense thunder-balls which are raining from Heaven
Have shattered its mast, and it stands black and riven.

The chinks suck destruction. The heavy dead hulk
On the living sea rolls an inanimate bulk,
Like a corpse on the clay which is hungering to fold
Its corruption around it. Meanwhile, from the hold,
One deck is burst up by the waters below,
And it splits like the ice when the thaw-breezes blow
O'er the lakes of the desert! Who sit on the other?
Is that all the crew that lie burying each other,
Like the dead in a breach, round the foremast? Are those
Twin tigers, who burst, when the waters arose,
In the agony of terror, their chains in the hold;
(What now makes them tame, is what then made them bold;)
Who crouch, side by side, and have driven, like a crank,
The deep grip of their claws through the vibrating plank
Are these all? Nine weeks the tall vessel had lain
On the windless expanse of the watery plain,
Where the death-darting sun cast no shadow at noon,
And there seemed to be fire in the beams of the moon,
Till a lead-coloured fog gathered up from the deep,
Whose breath was quick pestilence; then, the cold sleep
Crept, like blight through the ears of a thick field of corn,
O'er the populous vessel. And even and morn,
With their hammocks for coffins the seamen aghast
Like dead men the dead limbs of their comrades cast
Down the deep, which closed on them above and around,
And the sharks and the dogfish their grave-clothes unbound,
And were glutted like Jews with this manna rained down
From God on their wilderness. One after one
The mariners died; on the eve of this day,
When the tempest was gathering in cloudy array,
But seven remained. Six the thunder has smitten,
And they lie black as mummies on which Time has written
His scorn of the embalmer; the seventh, from the deck
An oak-splinter pierced through his breast and his back,
And hung out to the tempest, a wreck on the wreck.
No more? At the helm sits a woman more fair
Than Heaven, when, unbinding its star-braided hair,

It sinks with the sun on the earth and the sea.
She clasps a bright child on her upgathered knee;
It laughs at the lightning, it mocks the mixed thunder
Of the air and the sea, with desire and with wonder
It is beckoning the tigers to rise and come near,
It would play with those eyes where the radiance of fear
Is outshining the meteors; its bosom beats high,
The heart-fire of pleasure has kindled its eye,
While its mother's is lustreless. 'Smile not, my child,
But sleep deeply and sweetly, and so be beguiled
Of the pang that awaits us, whatever that be,
So dreadful since thou must divide it with me!
Dream, sleep! This pale bosom, thy cradle and bed,
Will it rock thee not, infant? 'Tis beating with dread!
Alas! what is life, what is death, what are we,
That when the ship sinks we no longer may be?
What! to see thee no more, and to feel thee no more?
To be after life what we have been before?
Not to touch those sweet hands? Not to look on those eyes,
Those lips, and that hair, — all the smiling disguise
Thou yet wearest, sweet Spirit, which I, day by day,
Have so long called my child, but which now fades away
Like a rainbow, and I the fallen shower?' — Lo! the ship
Is settling, it topples, the leeward ports dip;
The tigers leap up when they feel the slow brine
Crawling inch by inch on them; hair, ears, limbs, and eyne,
Stand rigid with horror; a loud, long, hoarse cry
Bursts at once from their vitals tremendously,
And 'tis borne down the mountainous vale of the wave,
Rebounding, like thunder, from crag to cave,
Mixed with the clash of the lashing rain,
Hurried on by the might of the hurricane:
The hurricane came from the west, and passed on
By the path of the gate of the eastern sun,
Transversely dividing the stream of the storm;
As an arrowy serpent, pursuing the form
Of an elephant, bursts through the brakes of the waste.

Black as a cormorant the screaming blast,
Between Ocean and Heaven, like an ocean, passed,
Till it came to the clouds on the verge of the world
Which, based on the sea and to Heaven upcurled,
Like columns and walls did surround and sustain
The dome of the tempest; it rent them in twain,
As a flood rends its barriers of mountainous crag:
And the dense clouds in many a ruin and rag,
Like the stones of a temple ere earthquake has passed,
Like the dust of its fall. on the whirlwind are cast;
They are scattered like foam on the torrent; and where
The wind has burst out through the chasm, from the air
Of clear morning the beams of the sunrise flow in,
Unimpeded, keen, golden, and crystalline,
Banded armies of light and of air; at one gate
They encounter, but interpenetrate.
And that breach in the tempest is widening away,
And the caverns of cloud are torn up by the day,
And the fierce winds are sinking with weary wings,
Lulled by the motion and murmurings
And the long glassy heave of the rocking sea,
And overhead glorious, but dreadful to see,
The wrecks of the tempest, like vapours of gold,
Are consuming in sunrise. The heaped waves behold
The deep calm of blue Heaven dilating above,
And, like passions made still by the presence of Love,
Beneath the clear surface reflecting it slide
Tremulous with soft influence; extending its tide
From the Andes to Atlas, round mountain and isle,
Round sea-birds and wrecks, paved with Heaven's azure smile,
The wide world of waters is vibrating. Where
Is the ship? On the verge of the wave where it lay
One tiger is mingled in ghastly affray
With a sea-snake. The foam and the smoke of the battle
Stain the clear air with sunbows; the jar, and the rattle
Of solid bones crushed by the infinite stress
Of the snake's adamantine voluminousness;

And the hum of the hot blood that spouts and rains
Where the gripe of the tiger has wounded the veins
Swollen with rage, strength, and effort; the whirl and the splash
As of some hideous engine whose brazen teeth smash
The thin winds and soft waves into thunder; the screams
And hissings crawl fast o'er the smooth ocean-streams,
Each sound like a centipede. Near this commotion,
A blue shark is hanging within the blue ocean,
The fin-winged tomb of the victor. The other
Is winning his way from the fate of his brother
To his own with the speed of despair. Lo! a boat
Advances; twelve rowers with the impulse of thought
Urge on the keen keel, — the brine foams. At the stern
Three marksmen stand levelling. Hot bullets burn
In the breast of the tiger, which yet bears him on
To his refuge and ruin. One fragment alone, —
'Tis dwindling and sinking, 'tis now almost gone, —
Of the wreck of the vessel peers out of the sea.
With her left hand she grasps it impetuously.
With her right she sustains her fair infant. Death, Fear,
Love, Beauty, are mixed in the atmosphere,
Which trembles and burns with the fervour of dread
Around her wild eyes, her bright hand, and her head,
Like a meteor of light o'er the waters! her child
Is yet smiling, and playing, and murmuring; so smiled
The false deep ere the storm. Like a sister and brother
The child and the ocean still smile on each other,
Whilst —

THE CLOUD.

(Published with "Prometheus Unbound", 1820.)

I bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,
From the seas and the streams;
I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
In their noonday dreams.
From my wings are shaken the dews that waken
The sweet buds every one,
When rocked to rest on their mother's breast,
As she dances about the sun.
I wield the flail of the lashing hail,
And whiten the green plains under,
And then again I dissolve it in rain,
And laugh as I pass in thunder.

I sift the snow on the mountains below,
And their great pines groan aghast;
And all the night 'tis my pillow white,
While I sleep in the arms of the blast.
Sublime on the towers of my skiey bowers,
Lightning my pilot sits;
In a cavern under is fettered the thunder,
It struggles and howls at fits;
Over earth and ocean, with gentle motion,
This pilot is guiding me,
Lured by the love of the genii that move
In the depths of the purple sea;
Over the rills, and the crags, and the hills.
Over the lakes and the plains,
Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream,
The Spirit he loves remains;
And I all the while bask in Heaven's blue smile,
Whilst he is dissolving in rains.

The sanguine Sunrise, with his meteor eyes,
And his burning plumes outspread,
Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,
When the morning star shines dead;
As on the jag of a mountain crag,
Which an earthquake rocks and swings,
An eagle alit one moment may sit
In the light of its golden wings.
And when Sunset may breathe, from the lit sea beneath,
Its ardours of rest and of love,
And the crimson pall of eve may fall
From the depth of Heaven above.
With wings folded I rest, on mine aery nest,
As still as a brooding dove.

That orbed maiden with white fire laden,
Whom mortals call the Moon,
Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,
By the midnight breezes strewn;
And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,
Which only the angels hear,
May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof.
The stars peep behind her and peer;
And I laugh to see them whirl and flee,
Like a swarm of golden bees.
When I widen the rent in my wind-built tent,
Till the calm rivers, lakes, and seas,
Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,
Are each paved with the moon and these.

I bind the Sun's throne with a burning zone,
And the Moon's with a girdle of pearl;
The volcanoes are dim, and the stars reel and swim,
When the whirlwinds my banner unfurl.
From cape to cape, with a bridge-like shape,
Over a torrent sea,
Sunbeam-proof, I hand like a roof, —

The mountains its columns be.
The triumphal arch through which I march
With hurricane, fire, and snow,
When the Powers of the air are chained to my chair,
Is the million-coloured bow;
The sphere-fire above its soft colours wove,
While the moist Earth was laughing below.

I am the daughter of Earth and Water,
And the nursling of the Sky;
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores;
I change, but I cannot die.
For after the rain when with never a stain
The pavilion of Heaven is bare,
And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams
Build up the blue dome of air,
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,
And out of the caverns of rain,
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
I arise and unbuild it again.

TO A SKYLARK.

(Composed at Leghorn, 1820, and published with "Prometheus Unbound" in the same year. There is a transcript in the Harvard manuscript.)

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from Heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are bright'ning.
Thou dost float and run;
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight;
Like a star of Heaven,
In the broad daylight
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight,

Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere,
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear
Until we hardly see — we feel that it is there.

All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,

As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and Heaven is overflowed.

What thou art we know not;
What is most like thee?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

Like a Poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not:

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace-tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower:

Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its aereal hue
Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the view!

Like a rose embowered
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflowered,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet those heavy-winged thieves:

Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers,

All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass:

Teach us, Sprite or Bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine:
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

Chorus Hymeneal,
Or triumphal chant,
Matched with thine would be all
But an empty vaunt,
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?
What fields, or waves, or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?

With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be:
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee:
Thou lovest — but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not:
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet if we could scorn
Hate, and pride, and fear;
If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures
Of delightful sound,
Better than all treasures
That in books are found,
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground!

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow
The world should listen then — as I am listening now.

ODE TO LIBERTY.

(Composed early in 1820, and published, with "Prometheus Unbound", in the same year. A transcript in Shelley's hand of lines 1-21 is included in the Harvard manuscript book, and amongst the Boscombe manuscripts there is a fragment of a rough draft (Garnett). For further particulars concerning the text see Editor's Notes.)

Yet, Freedom, yet, thy banner, torn but flying,
Streams like a thunder-storm against the wind. — BYRON.

1.
A glorious people vibrated again
The lightning of the nations: Liberty
From heart to heart, from tower to tower, o'er Spain,
Scattering contagious fire into the sky,
Gleamed. My soul spurned the chains of its dismay,
And in the rapid plumes of song
Clothed itself, sublime and strong;
As a young eagle soars the morning clouds among,
Hovering inverse o'er its accustomed prey;
Till from its station in the Heaven of fame
The Spirit's whirlwind rapped it, and the ray
Of the remotest sphere of living flame
Which paves the void was from behind it flung,
As foam from a ship's swiftness, when there came
A voice out of the deep: I will record the same.

2.
The Sun and the serenest Moon sprang forth:
The burning stars of the abyss were hurled
Into the depths of Heaven. The daedal earth,
That island in the ocean of the world,
Hung in its cloud of all-sustaining air:
But this divinest universe
Was yet a chaos and a curse,

For thou wert not: but, power from worst producing worse,
The spirit of the beasts was kindled there,
And of the birds, and of the watery forms,
And there was war among them, and despair
Within them, raging without truce or terms:
The bosom of their violated nurse
Groaned, for beasts warred on beasts, and worms on worms,
And men on men; each heart was as a hell of storms.

3.
Man, the imperial shape, then multiplied
His generations under the pavilion
Of the Sun's throne: palace and pyramid,
Temple and prison, to many a swarming million
Were, as to mountain-wolves their ragged caves.
This human living multitude
Was savage, cunning, blind, and rude,
For thou wert not; but o'er the populous solitude,
Like one fierce cloud over a waste of waves,
Hung Tyranny; beneath, sate deified
The sister-pest, congregator of slaves;
Into the shadow of her pinions wide
Anarchs and priests, who feed on gold and blood
Till with the stain their inmost souls are dyed,
Drove the astonished herds of men from every side.

4.
The nodding promontories, and blue isles,
And cloud-like mountains, and dividuous waves
Of Greece, basked glorious in the open smiles
Of favouring Heaven: from their enchanted caves
Prophetic echoes flung dim melody.
On the unapprehensive wild
The vine, the corn, the olive mild,
Grew savage yet, to human use unreconciled;
And, like unfolded flowers beneath the sea,
Like the man's thought dark in the infant's brain,

Like aught that is which wraps what is to be,
Art's deathless dreams lay veiled by many a vein
Of Parian stone; and, yet a speechless child,
Verse murmured, and Philosophy did strain
Her lidless eyes for thee; when o'er the Aegean main

5.
Athens arose: a city such as vision
Builds from the purple crags and silver towers
Of battlemented cloud, as in derision
Of kingliest masonry: the ocean-floors
Pave it; the evening sky pavilions it;
Its portals are inhabited
By thunder-zoned winds, each head
Within its cloudy wings with sun-fire garlanded, —
A divine work! Athens, diviner yet,
Gleamed with its crest of columns, on the will
Of man, as on a mount of diamond, set;
For thou wert, and thine all-creative skill
Peopled, with forms that mock the eternal dead
In marble immortality, that hill
Which was thine earliest throne and latest oracle.

6.
Within the surface of Time's fleeting river
Its wrinkled image lies, as then it lay
Immovably unquiet, and for ever
It trembles, but it cannot pass away!
The voices of thy bards and sages thunder
With an earth-awakening blast
Through the caverns of the past:
(Religion veils her eyes; Oppression shrinks aghast:)
A winged sound of joy, and love, and wonder,
Which soars where Expectation never flew,
Rending the veil of space and time asunder!
One ocean feeds the clouds, and streams, and dew;
One Sun illumines Heaven; one Spirit vast

With life and love makes chaos ever new,
As Athens doth the world with thy delight renew.

7.
Then Rome was, and from thy deep bosom fairest,
Like a wolf-cub from a Cadmaean Maenad,
She drew the milk of greatness, though thy dearest
From that Elysian food was yet unweaned;
And many a deed of terrible uprightness
By thy sweet love was sanctified;
And in thy smile, and by thy side,
Saintly Camillus lived, and firm Atilius died.
But when tears stained thy robe of vestal-whiteness,
And gold profaned thy Capitolian throne,
Thou didst desert, with spirit-winged lightness,
The senate of the tyrants: they sunk prone
Slaves of one tyrant: Palatinus sighed
Faint echoes of Ionian song; that tone
Thou didst delay to hear, lamenting to disown

8.
From what Hyrcanian glen or frozen hill,
Or piny promontory of the Arctic main,
Or utmost islet inaccessible,
Didst thou lament the ruin of thy reign,
Teaching the woods and waves, and desert rocks,
And every Naiad's ice-cold urn,
To talk in echoes sad and stern
Of that sublimest lore which man had dared unlearn?
For neither didst thou watch the wizard flocks
Of the Scald's dreams, nor haunt the Druid's sleep.
What if the tears rained through thy shattered locks
Were quickly dried? for thou didst groan, not weep,
When from its sea of death, to kill and burn,
The Galilean serpent forth did creep,
And made thy world an undistinguishable heap.

9.
A thousand years the Earth cried, ‘Where art thou?’
And then the shadow of thy coming fell
On Saxon Alfred’s olive-cinctured brow:
And many a warrior-peopled citadel.
Like rocks which fire lifts out of the flat deep,
Arose in sacred Italy,
Frowning o’er the tempestuous sea
Of kings, and priests, and slaves, in tower-crowned majesty;
That multitudinous anarchy did sweep
And burst around their walls, like idle foam,
Whilst from the human spirit’s deepest deep
Strange melody with love and awe struck dumb
Dissonant arms; and Art, which cannot die,
With divine wand traced on our earthly home
Fit imagery to pave Heaven’s everlasting dome.

10.
Thou huntress swifter than the Moon! thou terror
Of the world’s wolves! thou bearer of the quiver,
Whose sunlike shafts pierce tempest-winged Error,
As light may pierce the clouds when they dissever
In the calm regions of the orient day!
Luther caught thy wakening glance;
Like lightning, from his leaden lance
Reflected, it dissolved the visions of the trance
In which, as in a tomb, the nations lay;
And England’s prophets hailed thee as their queen,
In songs whose music cannot pass away,
Though it must flow forever: not unseen
Before the spirit-sighted countenance
Of Milton didst thou pass, from the sad scene
Beyond whose night he saw, with a dejected mien.

11.
The eager hours and unreluctant years
As on a dawn-illumined mountain stood.

Trampling to silence their loud hopes and fears,
Darkening each other with their multitude,
And cried aloud, ‘Liberty!’ Indignation
Answered Pity from her cave;
Death grew pale within the grave,
And Desolation howled to the destroyer, Save!
When like Heaven’s Sun girt by the exhalation
Of its own glorious light, thou didst arise.
Chasing thy foes from nation unto nation
Like shadows: as if day had cloven the skies
At dreaming midnight o’er the western wave,
Men started, staggering with a glad surprise,
Under the lightnings of thine unfamiliar eyes.

12.

Thou Heaven of earth! what spells could pall thee then
In ominous eclipse? a thousand years
Bred from the slime of deep Oppression’s den.
Dyed all thy liquid light with blood and tears.
Till thy sweet stars could weep the stain away;
How like Bacchanals of blood
Round France, the ghastly vintage, stood
Destruction’s sceptred slaves, and Folly’s mitred brood!
When one, like them, but mightier far than they,
The Anarch of thine own bewildered powers,
Rose: armies mingled in obscure array,
Like clouds with clouds, darkening the sacred bowers
Of serene Heaven. He, by the past pursued,
Rests with those dead, but unforgotten hours,
Whose ghosts scare victor kings in their ancestral towers.

13.

England yet sleeps: was she not called of old?
Spain calls her now, as with its thrilling thunder
Vesuvius wakens Aetna, and the cold
Snow-crags by its reply are cloven in sunder:
O’er the lit waves every Aeolian isle

From Pithecusa to Pelorus
Howls, and leaps, and glares in chorus:
They cry, ‘Be dim; ye lamps of Heaven suspended o’er us!’
Her chains are threads of gold, she need but smile
And they dissolve; but Spain’s were links of steel,
Till bit to dust by virtue’s keenest file.
Twins of a single destiny! appeal
To the eternal years enthroned before us
In the dim West; impress us from a seal,
All ye have thought and done! Time cannot dare conceal.

14.
Tomb of Arminius! render up thy dead
Till, like a standard from a watch-tower’s staff,
His soul may stream over the tyrant’s head;
Thy victory shall be his epitaph,
Wild Bacchanal of truth’s mysterious wine,
King-deluded Germany,
His dead spirit lives in thee.
Why do we fear or hope? thou art already free!
And thou, lost Paradise of this divine
And glorious world! thou flowery wilderness!
Thou island of eternity! thou shrine
Where Desolation, clothed with loveliness,
Worships the thing thou wert! O Italy,
Gather thy blood into thy heart; repress
The beasts who make their dens thy sacred palaces.

15.
Oh, that the free would stamp the impious name
Of KING into the dust! or write it there,
So that this blot upon the page of fame
Were as a serpent’s path, which the light air
Erases, and the flat sands close behind!
Ye the oracle have heard:
Lift the victory-flashing sword.
And cut the snaky knots of this foul gordian word,

Which, weak itself as stubble, yet can bind
Into a mass, irrefragably firm,
The axes and the rods which awe mankind;
The sound has poison in it, ‘tis the sperm
Of what makes life foul, cankerous, and abhorred;
Disdain not thou, at thine appointed term,
To set thine armed heel on this reluctant worm.

16.
Oh, that the wise from their bright minds would kindle
Such lamps within the dome of this dim world,
That the pale name of PRIEST might shrink and dwindle
Into the hell from which it first was hurled,
A scoff of impious pride from fiends impure;
Till human thoughts might kneel alone,
Each before the judgement-throne
Of its own aweless soul, or of the Power unknown!
Oh, that the words which make the thoughts obscure
From which they spring, as clouds of glimmering dew
From a white lake blot Heaven’s blue portraiture,
Were stripped of their thin masks and various hue
And frowns and smiles and splendours not their own,
Till in the nakedness of false and true
They stand before their Lord, each to receive its due!

17.
He who taught man to vanquish whatsoever
Can be between the cradle and the grave
Crowned him the King of Life. Oh, vain endeavour!
If on his own high will, a willing slave,
He has enthroned the oppression and the oppressor
What if earth can clothe and feed
Amplest millions at their need,
And power in thought be as the tree within the seed?
Or what if Art, an ardent intercessor,
Driving on fiery wings to Nature’s throne,
Checks the great mother stooping to caress her,

And cries: ‘Give me, thy child, dominion
Over all height and depth’? if Life can breed
New wants, and wealth from those who toil and groan,
Rend of thy gifts and hers a thousandfold for one!

18.
Come thou, but lead out of the inmost cave
Of man’s deep spirit, as the morning-star
Beckons the Sun from the Eoan wave,
Wisdom. I hear the pennons of her car
Self-moving, like cloud charioted by flame;
Comes she not, and come ye not,
Rulers of eternal thought,
To judge, with solemn truth, life’s ill-apportioned lot?
Blind Love, and equal Justice, and the Fame
Of what has been, the Hope of what will be?
O Liberty! if such could be thy name
Wert thou disjoined from these, or they from thee:
If thine or theirs were treasures to be bought
By blood or tears, have not the wise and free
Wept tears, and blood like tears? — The solemn harmony

19.
Paused, and the Spirit of that mighty singing
To its abyss was suddenly withdrawn;
Then, as a wild swan, when sublimely winging
Its path athwart the thunder-smoke of dawn,
Sinks headlong through the aereal golden light
On the heavy-sounding plain,
When the bolt has pierced its brain;
As summer clouds dissolve, unburthened of their rain;
As a far taper fades with fading night,
As a brief insect dies with dying day, —
My song, its pinions disarrayed of might,
Drooped; o’er it closed the echoes far away
Of the great voice which did its flight sustain,

As waves which lately paved his watery way
Hiss round a drowner's head in their tempestuous play.

CANCELLED PASSAGE OF THE ODE TO LIBERTY.

(Published by Dr. Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862.)

Within a cavern of man's trackless spirit
Is throned an Image, so intensely fair
That the adventurous thoughts that wander near it
Worship, and as they kneel, tremble and wear
The splendour of its presence, and the light
Penetrates their dreamlike frame
Till they become charged with the strength of flame.

TO — .

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.)

1.
I fear thy kisses, gentle maiden,
Thou needest not fear mine;
My spirit is too deeply laden
Ever to burthen thine.

2.
I fear thy mien, thy tones, thy motion,
Thou needest not fear mine;
Innocent is the heart's devotion
With which I worship thine.

ARETHUSA.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824, and dated by her 'Pisa, 1820.' There is a fair draft amongst the Shelley manuscripts at the Bodleian Library. See Mr. C.D. Locock's "Examination", etc., 1903, page 24.)

1.
Arethusa arose
From her couch of snows
In the Acroceraunian mountains, —
From cloud and from crag,
With many a jag,
Shepherding her bright fountains.
She leapt down the rocks,
With her rainbow locks
Streaming among the streams; —
Her steps paved with green
The downward ravine
Which slopes to the western gleams;
And gliding and springing
She went, ever singing,
In murmurs as soft as sleep;
The Earth seemed to love her,
And Heaven smiled above her,
As she lingered towards the deep.

2.
Then Alpheus bold,
On his glacier cold,
With his trident the mountains strook;
And opened a chasm
In the rocks — with the spasm
All Erymanthus shook.
And the black south wind
It unsealed behind

The urns of the silent snow,
And earthquake and thunder
Did rend in sunder
The bars of the springs below.
And the beard and the hair
Of the River-god were
Seen through the torrent's sweep,
As he followed the light
Of the fleet nymph's flight
To the brink of the Dorian deep.

3.
'Oh, save me! Oh, guide me!
And bid the deep hide me,
For he grasps me now by the hair!'
The loud Ocean heard,
To its blue depth stirred,
And divided at her prayer;
And under the water
The Earth's white daughter
Fled like a sunny beam;
Behind her descended
Her billows, unblended
With the brackish Dorian stream: —
Like a gloomy stain
On the emerald main
Alpheus rushed behind, —
As an eagle pursuing
A dove to its ruin
Down the streams of the cloudy wind.

4.
Under the bowers
Where the Ocean Powers
Sit on their pearled thrones;
Through the coral woods
Of the weltering floods,

Over heaps of unvalued stones;
Through the dim beams
Which amid the streams
Weave a network of coloured light;
And under the caves,
Where the shadowy waves
Are as green as the forest's night: —
Outspeeding the shark,
And the sword-fish dark,
Under the Ocean's foam,
And up through the rifts
Of the mountain clifts
They passed to their Dorian home.

5.
And now from their fountains
In Enna's mountains,
Down one vale where the morning basks,
Like friends once parted
Grown single-hearted,
They ply their watery tasks.
At sunrise they leap
From their cradles steep
In the cave of the shelving hill;
At noontide they flow
Through the woods below
And the meadows of asphodel;
And at night they sleep
In the rocking deep
Beneath the Ortygian shore; —
Like spirits that lie
In the azure sky
When they love but live no more.

SONG OF PROSERPINE WHILE GATHERING FLOWERS ON THE PLAIN OF ENNA.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition. There is a fair draft amongst the Shelley manuscripts at the Bodleian Library. See Mr. C.D. Locock's "Examination," etc., 1903, page 24.)

1.
Sacred Goddess, Mother Earth,
Thou from whose immortal bosom
Gods, and men, and beasts have birth,
Leaf and blade, and bud and blossom,
Breathe thine influence most divine
On thine own child, Proserpine.

2.
If with mists of evening dew
Thou dost nourish these young flowers
Till they grow, in scent and hue,
Fairest children of the Hours,
Breathe thine influence most divine
On thine own child, Proserpine.

HYMN OF APOLLO.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824. There is a fair draft amongst the Shelley manuscripts at the Bodleian. See Mr. C.D. Locock's "Examination", etc., 1903, page 25.)

1.
The sleepless Hours who watch me as I lie,
Curtained with star-inwoven tapestries
From the broad moonlight of the sky,
Fanning the busy dreams from my dim eyes, —
Waken me when their Mother, the gray Dawn,
Tells them that dreams and that the moon is gone.

2.
Then I arise, and climbing Heaven's blue dome,
I walk over the mountains and the waves,
Leaving my robe upon the ocean foam;
My footsteps pave the clouds with fire; the caves
Are filled with my bright presence, and the air
Leaves the green Earth to my embraces bare.

3.
The sunbeams are my shafts, with which I kill
Deceit, that loves the night and fears the day;
All men who do or even imagine ill
Fly me, and from the glory of my ray
Good minds and open actions take new might,
Until diminished by the reign of Night.

4.
I feed the clouds, the rainbows and the flowers
With their aethereal colours; the moon's globe
And the pure stars in their eternal bowers
Are cinctured with my power as with a robe;
Whatever lamps on Earth or Heaven may shine
Are portions of one power, which is mine.

5.
I stand at noon upon the peak of Heaven,
Then with unwilling steps I wander down
Into the clouds of the Atlantic even;
For grief that I depart they weep and frown:
What look is more delightful than the smile
With which I soothe them from the western isle?

6.
I am the eye with which the Universe
Beholds itself and knows itself divine;
All harmony of instrument or verse,
All prophecy, all medicine is mine,
All light of art or nature; — to my song
Victory and praise in its own right belong.

HYMN OF PAN.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824. There is a fair draft amongst the Shelley manuscripts at the Bodleian. See Mr. C.D. Locock's "Examination", etc., 1903, page 25.)

1.
From the forests and highlands
We come, we come;
From the river-girt islands,
Where loud waves are dumb
Listening to my sweet pipings.
The wind in the reeds and the rushes,
The bees on the bells of thyme,
The birds on the myrtle bushes,
The cicale above in the lime,
And the lizards below in the grass,
Were as silent as ever old Tmolus was,
Listening to my sweet pipings.

2.
Liquid Peneus was flowing,
And all dark Tempe lay
In Pelion's shadow, outgrowing
The light of the dying day,
Speeded by my sweet pipings.
The Sileni, and Sylvans, and Fauns,
And the Nymphs of the woods and the waves,
To the edge of the moist river-lawns,
And the brink of the dewy caves,
And all that did then attend and follow,
Were silent with love, as you now, Apollo,
With envy of my sweet pipings.

3.
I sang of the dancing stars,

I sang of the daedal Earth,
And of Heaven — and the giant wars,
And Love, and Death, and Birth, —
And then I changed my pipings, —
Singing how down the vale of Maenalus
I pursued a maiden and clasped a reed.
Gods and men, we are all deluded thus!
It breaks in our bosom and then we bleed:
All wept, as I think both ye now would,
If envy or age had not frozen your blood,
At the sorrow of my sweet pipings.

THE QUESTION.

(Published by Leigh Hunt (with the signature Sigma) in "The Literary Pocket-Book", 1822. Reprinted by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824. Copies exist in the Harvard manuscript book, amongst the Boscombe manuscripts, and amongst Ollier manuscripts.)

1.
I dreamed that, as I wandered by the way,
Bare Winter suddenly was changed to Spring,
And gentle odours led my steps astray,
Mixed with a sound of waters murmuring
Along a shelving bank of turf, which lay
Under a copse, and hardly dared to fling
Its green arms round the bosom of the stream,
But kissed it and then fled, as thou mightest in dream.

2.
There grew pied wind-flowers and violets,
Daisies, those pearled Arcturi of the earth,
The constellated flower that never sets;
Faint oxslips; tender bluebells, at whose birth
The sod scarce heaved; and that tall flower that wets —
Like a child, half in tenderness and mirth —
Its mother's face with Heaven's collected tears,
When the low wind, its playmate's voice, it hears.

3.
And in the warm hedge grew lush eglantine,
Green cowbind and the moonlight-coloured may,
And cherry-blossoms, and white cups, whose wine
Was the bright dew, yet drained not by the day;
And wild roses, and ivy serpentine,
With its dark buds and leaves, wandering astray;
And flowers azure, black, and streaked with gold,
Fairer than any wakened eyes behold.

4.
And nearer to the river's trembling edge
There grew broad flag-flowers, purple pranked with white.
And starry river buds among the sedge,
And floating water-lilies, broad and bright,
Which lit the oak that overhung the hedge
With moonlight beams of their own watery light;
And bulrushes, and reeds of such deep green
As soothed the dazzled eye with sober sheen.

5.
Methought that of these visionary flowers
I made a nosegay, bound in such a way
That the same hues, which in their natural bowers
Were mingled or opposed, the like array
Kept these imprisoned children of the Hours
Within my hand, — and then, elate and gay,
I hastened to the spot whence I had come,
That I might there present it! — Oh! to whom?

THE TWO SPIRITS: AN ALLEGORY.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.)

FIRST SPIRIT:
O thou, who plumed with strong desire
Wouldst float above the earth, beware!
A Shadow tracks thy flight of fire —
Night is coming!
Bright are the regions of the air,
And among the winds and beams
It were delight to wander there —
Night is coming!

SECOND SPIRIT:
The deathless stars are bright above;
If I would cross the shade of night,
Within my heart is the lamp of love,
And that is day!
And the moon will smile with gentle light
On my golden plumes where'er they move;
The meteors will linger round my flight,
And make night day.

FIRST SPIRIT:
But if the whirlwinds of darkness waken
Hail, and lightning, and stormy rain;
See, the bounds of the air are shaken —
Night is coming!
The red swift clouds of the hurricane
Yon declining sun have overtaken,
The clash of the hail sweeps over the plain —
Night is coming!

SECOND SPIRIT:
I see the light, and I hear the sound;
I'll sail on the flood of the tempest dark

With the calm within and the light around
Which makes night day:
And thou, when the gloom is deep and stark,
Look from thy dull earth, slumber-bound,
My moon-like flight thou then mayst mark
On high, far away.

…

Some say there is a precipice
Where one vast pine is frozen to ruin
O'er piles of snow and chasms of ice
Mid Alpine mountains;
And that the languid storm pursuing
That winged shape, for ever flies
Round those hoar branches, aye renewing
Its aery fountains.

Some say when nights are dry and clear,
And the death-dews sleep on the morass,
Sweet whispers are heard by the traveller,
Which make night day:
And a silver shape like his early love doth pass
Upborne by her wild and glittering hair,
And when he awakes on the fragrant grass,
He finds night day.

ODE TO NAPLES.

(The Author has connected many recollections of his visit to Pompeii and Baiae with the enthusiasm excited by the intelligence of the proclamation of a Constitutional Government at Naples. This has given a tinge of picturesque and descriptive imagery to the introductory Epodes which depicture these scenes, and some of the majestic feelings permanently connected with the scene of this animating event.)

(Composed at San Juliano di Pisa, August 17-25, 1820; published in "Posthumous Poems", 1824. There is a copy, 'for the most part neat and legible,' amongst the Shelley manuscripts at the Bodleian Library. See Mr. C.D. Locock's "Examination", etc., 1903, pages 14-18.)

EPODE 1a.

I stood within the City disinterred;
And heard the autumnal leaves like light footfalls
Of spirits passing through the streets; and heard
The Mountain's slumberous voice at intervals
Thrill through those roofless halls;
The oracular thunder penetrating shook
The listening soul in my suspended blood;
I felt that Earth out of her deep heart spoke —
I felt, but heard not: — through white columns glowed
The isle-sustaining ocean-flood,
A plane of light between two heavens of azure!
Around me gleamed many a bright sepulchre
Of whose pure beauty, Time, as if his pleasure
Were to spare Death, had never made erasure;
But every living lineament was clear
As in the sculptor's thought; and there
The wreaths of stony myrtle, ivy, and pine,
Like winter leaves o'ergrown by moulded snow,
Seemed only not to move and grow
Because the crystal silence of the air

Weighed on their life; even as the Power divine
Which then lulled all things, brooded upon mine.

EPODE 2a.

Then gentle winds arose
With many a mingled close
Of wild Aeolian sound, and mountain-odours keen;
And where the Baian ocean
Welters with airlike motion,
Within, above, around its bowers of starry green,
Moving the sea-flowers in those purple caves,
Even as the ever stormless atmosphere
Floats o'er the Elysian realm,
It bore me, like an Angel, o'er the waves
Of sunlight, whose swift pinnace of dewy air
No storm can overwhelm.
I sailed, where ever flows
Under the calm Serene
A spirit of deep emotion
From the unknown graves
Of the dead Kings of Melody.
Shadowy Aornos darkened o'er the helm
The horizontal aether; Heaven stripped bare
Its depth over Elysium, where the prow
Made the invisible water white as snow;
From that Typhaean mount, Inarime,
There streamed a sunbright vapour, like the standard
Of some aethereal host;
Whilst from all the coast,
Louder and louder, gathering round, there wandered
Over the oracular woods and divine sea
Prophesyings which grew articulate —
They seize me — I must speak them! — be they fate!

STROPHE 1.

Naples! thou Heart of men which ever pantest
Naked, beneath the lidless eye of Heaven!
Elysian City, which to calm enchantest
The mutinous air and sea! they round thee, even
As sleep round Love, are driven!
Metropolis of a ruined Paradise
Long lost, late won, and yet but half regained!
Bright Altar of the bloodless sacrifice
Which armed Victory offers up unstained
To Love, the flower-enchained!
Thou which wert once, and then didst cease to be,
Now art, and henceforth ever shalt be, free,
If Hope, and Truth, and Justice can avail, —
Hail, hail, all hail!

STROPHE 2.

Thou youngest giant birth
Which from the groaning earth
Leap'st, clothed in armour of impenetrable scale!
Last of the Intercessors!
Who 'gainst the Crowned Transgressors
Pleadest before God's love! Arrayed in Wisdom's mail,
Wave thy lightning lance in mirth
Nor let thy high heart fail,
Though from their hundred gates the leagued Oppressors
With hurried legions move!
Hail, hail, all hail!

ANTISTROPHE 1a.

What though Cimmerian Anarchs dare blaspheme
Freedom and thee? thy shield is as a mirror
To make their blind slaves see, and with fierce gleam
To turn his hungry sword upon the wearer;
A new Actaeon's error
Shall theirs have been — devoured by their own hounds!
Be thou like the imperial Basilisk
Killing thy foe with unapparent wounds!
Gaze on Oppression, till at that dread risk
Aghast she pass from the Earth's disk:
Fear not, but gaze — for freemen mightier grow,
And slaves more feeble, gazing on their foe: —
If Hope, and Truth, and Justice may avail,
Thou shalt be great — All hail!

ANTISTROPHE 2a.

From Freedom's form divine,
From Nature's inmost shrine,
Strip every impious gawd, rend
Error veil by veil;

O’er Ruin desolate,
O’er Falsehood’s fallen state,
Sit thou sublime, unawed; be the Destroyer pale!
And equal laws be thine,
And winged words let sail,
Freighted with truth even from the throne of God:
That wealth, surviving fate,
Be thine. — All hail!

ANTISTROPHE 1b.

Didst thou not start to hear Spain’s thrilling paean
From land to land re-echoed solemnly,
Till silence became music? From the Aeaean
To the cold Alps, eternal Italy
Starts to hear thine! The Sea
Which paves the desert streets of Venice laughs
In light, and music; widowed Genoa wan
By moonlight spells ancestral epitaphs,
Murmuring, ‘Where is Doria?’ fair Milan,
Within whose veins long ran
The viper’s palsying venom, lifts her heel
To bruise his head. The signal and the seal
(If Hope and Truth and Justice can avail)
Art thou of all these hopes. — O hail!

ANTISTROPHE 2b.

Florence! beneath the sun,
Of cities fairest one,
Blushes within her bower for Freedom’s expectation:
From eyes of quenchless hope
Rome tears the priestly cope,
As ruling once by power, so now by admiration, —
An athlete stripped to run
From a remoter station
For the high prize lost on Philippi’s shore: —

As then Hope, Truth, and Justice did avail,
So now may Fraud and Wrong! O hail!

EPODE 1b.

Hear ye the march as of the Earth-born Forms
Arrayed against the ever-living Gods?
The crash and darkness of a thousand storms
Bursting their inaccessible abodes
Of crags and thunder-clouds?
See ye the banners blazoned to the day,
Inwrought with emblems of barbaric pride?
Dissonant threats kill Silence far away,
The serene Heaven which wraps our Eden wide
With iron light is dyed;
The Anarchs of the North lead forth their legions
Like Chaos o'er creation, uncreating;
An hundred tribes nourished on strange religions
And lawless slaveries, — down the aereal regions
Of the white Alps, desolating,
Famished wolves that bide no waiting,
Blotting the glowing footsteps of old glory,
Trampling our columned cities into dust,
Their dull and savage lust
On Beauty's corse to sickness satiating —
They come! The fields they tread look black and hoary
With fire — from their red feet the streams run gory!

EPODE 2b.

Great Spirit, deepest Love!
Which rulest and dost move
All things which live and are, within the Italian shore;
Who spreadest Heaven around it,
Whose woods, rocks, waves, surround it;
Who sittest in thy star, o'er Ocean's western floor;
Spirit of beauty! at whose soft command
The sunbeams and the showers distil its foison

From the Earth's bosom chill;
Oh, bid those beams be each a blinding brand
Of lightning! bid those showers be dews of poison!
Bid the Earth's plenty kill!
Bid thy bright Heaven above,
Whilst light and darkness bound it,
Be their tomb who planned
To make it ours and thine!
Or, with thine harmonizing ardours fill
And raise thy sons, as o'er the prone horizon
Thy lamp feeds every twilight wave with fire —
Be man's high hope and unextinct desire
The instrument to work thy will divine!
Then clouds from sunbeams, antelopes from leopards,
And frowns and fears from thee,
Would not more swiftly flee
Than Celtic wolves from the Ausonian shepherds. —
Whatever, Spirit, from thy starry shrine
Thou yieldest or withholdest, oh, let be
This city of thy worship ever free!

AUTUMN: A DIRGE.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.)

1.
The warm sun is failing, the bleak wind is wailing,
The bare boughs are sighing, the pale flowers are dying,
And the Year
On the earth her death-bed, in a shroud of leaves dead,
Is lying.
Come, Months, come away,
From November to May,
In your saddest array;
Follow the bier
Of the dead cold Year,
And like dim shadows watch by her sepulchre.

2.
The chill rain is falling, the nipped worm is crawling,
The rivers are swelling, the thunder is knelling
For the Year;
The blithe swallows are flown, and the lizards each gone
To his dwelling;
Come, Months, come away;
Put on white, black, and gray;
Let your light sisters play —
Ye, follow the bier
Of the dead cold Year,
And make her grave green with tear on tear.

THE WANING MOON.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.)

And like a dying lady, lean and pale,
Who totters forth, wrapped in a gauzy veil,
Out of her chamber, led by the insane
And feeble wanderings of her fading brain,
The moon arose up in the murky East,
A white and shapeless mass —

TO THE MOON.

(Published (1) by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824, (2) by W.M. Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works", 1870.)

1.
Art thou pale for weariness
Of climbing heaven and gazing on the earth,
Wandering companionless
Among the stars that have a different birth, —
And ever changing, like a joyless eye
That finds no object worth its constancy?

2.
Thou chosen sister of the Spirit,
That grazes on thee till in thee it pities…

DEATH.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.)

1.
Death is here and death is there,
Death is busy everywhere,
All around, within, beneath,
Above is death — and we are death.

2.
Death has set his mark and seal
On all we are and all we feel,
On all we know and all we fear,

…

3.
First our pleasures die — and then
Our hopes, and then our fears — and when
These are dead, the debt is due,
Dust claims dust — and we die too.

4.
All things that we love and cherish,
Like ourselves must fade and perish;
Such is our rude mortal lot —
Love itself would, did they not.

LIBERTY.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.)

1.
The fiery mountains answer each other;
Their thunderings are echoed from zone to zone;
The tempestuous oceans awake one another,
And the ice-rocks are shaken round Winter's throne,
When the clarion of the Typhoon is blown.

2.
From a single cloud the lightening flashes,
Whilst a thousand isles are illumined around,
Earthquake is trampling one city to ashes,
An hundred are shuddering and tottering; the sound
Is bellowing underground.

3.
But keener thy gaze than the lightening's glare,
And swifter thy step than the earthquake's tramp;
Thou deafenest the rage of the ocean; thy stare
Makes blind the volcanoes; the sun's bright lamp
To thine is a fen-fire damp.

4.
From billow and mountain and exhalation
The sunlight is darted through vapour and blast;
From spirit to spirit, from nation to nation,
From city to hamlet thy dawning is cast, —
And tyrants and slaves are like shadows of night
In the van of the morning light.

SUMMER AND WINTER.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley in "The Keepsake", 1829. Mr. C.W. Frederickson of Brooklyn possesses a transcript in Mrs. Shelley's handwriting.)

It was a bright and cheerful afternoon,
Towards the end of the sunny month of June,
When the north wind congregates in crowds
The floating mountains of the silver clouds
From the horizon — and the stainless sky
Opens beyond them like eternity.
All things rejoiced beneath the sun; the weeds,
The river, and the corn-fields, and the reeds;
The willow leaves that glanced in the light breeze,
And the firm foliage of the larger trees.

It was a winter such as when birds die
In the deep forests; and the fishes lie
Stiffened in the translucent ice, which makes
Even the mud and slime of the warm lakes
A wrinkled clod as hard as brick; and when,
Among their children, comfortable men
Gather about great fires, and yet feel cold:
Alas, then, for the homeless beggar old!

THE TOWER OF FAMINE.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley in "The Keepsake", 1829. Mr. C.W. Frederickson of Brooklyn possesses a transcript in Mrs. Shelley's handwriting.)

Amid the desolation of a city,
Which was the cradle, and is now the grave
Of an extinguished people, — so that Pity

Weeps o'er the shipwrecks of Oblivion's wave,
There stands the Tower of Famine. It is built
Upon some prison-homes, whose dwellers rave

For bread, and gold, and blood: Pain, linked to Guilt,
Agitates the light flame of their hours,
Until its vital oil is spent or spilt.

There stands the pile, a tower amid the towers
And sacred domes; each marble-ribbed roof,
The brazen-gated temples, and the bowers

Of solitary wealth, — the tempest-proof
Pavilions of the dark Italian air, —
Are by its presence dimmed — they stand aloof,

And are withdrawn — so that the world is bare;
As if a spectre wrapped in shapeless terror
Amid a company of ladies fair

Should glide and glow, till it became a mirror
Of all their beauty, and their hair and hue,
The life of their sweet eyes, with all its error,
Should be absorbed, till they to marble grew.

AN ALLEGORY.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.)

1.
A portal as of shadowy adamant
Stands yawning on the highway of the life
Which we all tread, a cavern huge and gaunt;
Around it rages an unceasing strife
Of shadows, like the restless clouds that haunt
The gap of some cleft mountain, lifted high
Into the whirlwinds of the upper sky.

2.
And many pass it by with careless tread,
Not knowing that a shadowy …
Tracks every traveller even to where the dead
Wait peacefully for their companion new;
But others, by more curious humour led,
Pause to examine; — these are very few,
And they learn little there, except to know
That shadows follow them where'er they go.

THE WORLD'S WANDERERS.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.)

1.
Tell me, thou Star, whose wings of light
Speed thee in thy fiery flight,
In what cavern of the night
Will thy pinions close now?

2.
Tell me, Moon, thou pale and gray
Pilgrim of Heaven's homeless way,
In what depth of night or day
Seekest thou repose now?

3.
Weary Wind, who wanderest
Like the world's rejected guest,
Hast thou still some secret nest
On the tree or billow?

SONNET.

(Published by Leigh Hunt, "The Literary Pocket-Book", 1823. There is a transcript amongst the Ollier manuscripts, and another in the Harvard manuscript book.)

Ye hasten to the grave! What seek ye there,
Ye restless thoughts and busy purposes
Of the idle brain, which the world's livery wear?
O thou quick heart, which pantest to possess
All that pale Expectation feigneth fair!
Thou vainly curious mind which wouldest guess
Whence thou didst come, and whither thou must go,
And all that never yet was known would know —
Oh, whither hasten ye, that thus ye press,
With such swift feet life's green and pleasant path,
Seeking, alike from happiness and woe,
A refuge in the cavern of gray death?
O heart, and mind, and thoughts! what thing do you
Hope to inherit in the grave below?

LINES TO A REVIEWER.

(Published by Leigh Hunt, "The Literary Pocket-Book", 1823. These lines, and the "Sonnet" immediately preceding, are signed Sigma in the "Literary Pocket-Book".)

Alas, good friend, what profit can you see
In hating such a hateless thing as me?
There is no sport in hate where all the rage
Is on one side: in vain would you assuage
Your frowns upon an unresisting smile,
In which not even contempt lurks to beguile
Your heart, by some faint sympathy of hate.
Oh, conquer what you cannot satiate!
For to your passion I am far more coy
Than ever yet was coldest maid or boy
In winter noon. Of your antipathy
If I am the Narcissus, you are free
To pine into a sound with hating me.

FRAGMENT OF A SATIRE ON SATIRE.

(Published by Edward Dowden, "Correspondence of Robert Southey and Caroline Bowles", 1880.)

If gibbets, axes, confiscations, chains,
And racks of subtle torture, if the pains
Of shame, of fiery Hell's tempestuous wave,
Seen through the caverns of the shadowy grave,
Hurling the damned into the murky air
While the meek blest sit smiling; if Despair
And Hate, the rapid bloodhounds with which Terror
Hunts through the world the homeless steps of Error,
Are the true secrets of the commonweal
To make men wise and just;…
And not the sophisms of revenge and fear,
Bloodier than is revenge…
Then send the priests to every hearth and home
To preach the burning wrath which is to come,
In words like flakes of sulphur, such as thaw
The frozen tears…
If Satire's scourge could wake the slumbering hounds
Of Conscience, or erase the deeper wounds,
The leprous scars of callous Infamy;
If it could make the present not to be,
Or charm the dark past never to have been,
Or turn regret to hope; who that has seen
What Southey is and was, would not exclaim,
'Lash on!' … be the keen verse dipped in flame;
Follow his flight with winged words, and urge
The strokes of the inexorable scourge
Until the heart be naked, till his soul
See the contagion's spots … foul;
And from the mirror of Truth's sunlike shield,
From which his Parthian arrow…
Flash on his sight the spectres of the past,

Until his mind's eye paint thereon —
Let scorn like … yawn below,
And rain on him like flakes of fiery snow.
This cannot be, it ought not, evil still —
Suffering makes suffering, ill must follow ill.
Rough words beget sad thoughts, … and, beside,
Men take a sullen and a stupid pride
In being all they hate in others' shame,
By a perverse antipathy of fame.
'Tis not worth while to prove, as I could, how
From the sweet fountains of our Nature flow
These bitter waters; I will only say,
If any friend would take Southey some day,
And tell him, in a country walk alone,
Softening harsh words with friendship's gentle tone,
How incorrect his public conduct is,
And what men think of it, 'twere not amiss.
Far better than to make innocent ink —

GOOD-NIGHT.

(Published by Leigh Hunt over the signature Sigma, "The Literary Pocket-Book", 1822. It is included in the Harvard manuscript book, and there is a transcript by Shelley in a copy of "The Literary Pocket-Book", 1819, presented by him to Miss Sophia Stacey, December 29, 1820. (See "Love's Philosophy" and "Time Long Past".) Our text is that of the editio princeps, 1822, with which the Harvard manuscript and "Posthumous Poems", 1824, agree. The variants of the Stacey manuscript, 1820, are given in the footnotes.)

1.
Good-night? ah! no; the hour is ill
Which severs those it should unite;
Let us remain together still,
Then it will be GOOD night.

2.
How can I call the lone night good,
Though thy sweet wishes wing its flight?
Be it not said, thought, understood —
Then it will be — GOOD night.

3.
To hearts which near each other move
From evening close to morning light,
The night is good; because, my love,
They never SAY good-night.

BUONA NOTTE.

(Published by Medwin, "The Angler in Wales, or Days and Nights of Sportsmen", 1834. The text is revised by Rossetti from the Boscombe manuscript.)

1.
'Buona notte, buona notte!' — Come mai
La notte sara buona senza te?
Non dirmi buona notte, — che tu sai,
La notte sa star buona da per se.

2.
Solinga, scura, cupa, senza speme,
La notte quando Lilla m'abbandona;
Pei cuori chi si batton insieme
Ogni notte, senza dirla, sara buona.

3.
Come male buona notte ci suona
Con sospiri e parole interrotte! —
Il modo di aver la notte buona
E mai non di dir la buona notte.

ORPHEUS.

(Published by Dr. Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862; revised and enlarged by Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1870.)

A:
Not far from hence. From yonder pointed hill,
Crowned with a ring of oaks, you may behold
A dark and barren field, through which there flows,
Sluggish and black, a deep but narrow stream,
Which the wind ripples not, and the fair moon
Gazes in vain, and finds no mirror there.
Follow the herbless banks of that strange brook
Until you pause beside a darksome pond,
The fountain of this rivulet, whose gush
Cannot be seen, hid by a rayless night
That lives beneath the overhanging rock
That shades the pool — an endless spring of gloom,
Upon whose edge hovers the tender light,
Trembling to mingle with its paramour, —
But, as Syrinx fled Pan, so night flies day,
Or, with most sullen and regardless hate,
Refuses stern her heaven-born embrace.
On one side of this jagged and shapeless hill
There is a cave, from which there eddies up
A pale mist, like aereal gossamer,
Whose breath destroys all life — awhile it veils
The rock — then, scattered by the wind, it flies
Along the stream, or lingers on the clefts,
Killing the sleepy worms, if aught bide there.
Upon the beetling edge of that dark rock
There stands a group of cypresses; not such
As, with a graceful spire and stirring life,
Pierce the pure heaven of your native vale,
Whose branches the air plays among, but not
Disturbs, fearing to spoil their solemn grace;

But blasted and all wearily they stand,
One to another clinging; their weak boughs
Sigh as the wind buffets them, and they shake
Beneath its blasts — a weatherbeaten crew!

CHORUS:
What wondrous sound is that, mournful and faint,
But more melodious than the murmuring wind
Which through the columns of a temple glides?

A:
It is the wandering voice of Orpheus' lyre,
Borne by the winds, who sigh that their rude king
Hurries them fast from these air-feeding notes;
But in their speed they bear along with them
The waning sound, scattering it like dew
Upon the startled sense.

CHORUS:
Does he still sing?
Methought he rashly cast away his harp
When he had lost Eurydice.

A:
Ah, no!
Awhile he paused. As a poor hunted stag
A moment shudders on the fearful brink
Of a swift stream — the cruel hounds press on
With deafening yell, the arrows glance and wound, —
He plunges in: so Orpheus, seized and torn
By the sharp fangs of an insatiate grief,
Maenad-like waved his lyre in the bright air,
And wildly shrieked 'Where she is, it is dark!'
And then he struck from forth the strings a sound
Of deep and fearful melody. Alas!
In times long past, when fair Eurydice
With her bright eyes sat listening by his side,
He gently sang of high and heavenly themes.

As in a brook, fretted with little waves
By the light airs of spring — each riplet makes
A many-sided mirror for the sun,
While it flows musically through green banks,
Ceaseless and pauseless, ever clear and fresh,
So flowed his song, reflecting the deep joy
And tender love that fed those sweetest notes,
The heavenly offspring of ambrosial food.
But that is past. Returning from drear Hell,
He chose a lonely seat of unhewn stone,
Blackened with lichens, on a herbless plain.
Then from the deep and overflowing spring
Of his eternal ever-moving grief
There rose to Heaven a sound of angry song.
‘Tis as a mighty cataract that parts
Two sister rocks with waters swift and strong,
And casts itself with horrid roar and din
Adown a steep; from a perennial source
It ever flows and falls, and breaks the air
With loud and fierce, but most harmonious roar,
And as it falls casts up a vaporous spray
Which the sun clothes in hues of Iris light.
Thus the tempestuous torrent of his grief
Is clothed in sweetest sounds and varying words
Of poesy. Unlike all human works,
It never slackens, and through every change
Wisdom and beauty and the power divine
Of mighty poesy together dwell,
Mingling in sweet accord. As I have seen
A fierce south blast tear through the darkened sky,
Driving along a rack of winged clouds,
Which may not pause, but ever hurry on,
As their wild shepherd wills them, while the stars,
Twinkling and dim, peep from between the plumes.
Anon the sky is cleared, and the high dome
Of serene Heaven, starred with fiery flowers,
Shuts in the shaken earth; or the still moon

Swiftly, yet gracefully, begins her walk,
Rising all bright behind the eastern hills.
I talk of moon, and wind, and stars, and not
Of song; but, would I echo his high song,
Nature must lend me words ne'er used before,
Or I must borrow from her perfect works,
To picture forth his perfect attributes.
He does no longer sit upon his throne
Of rock upon a desert herbless plain,
For the evergreen and knotted ilexes,
And cypresses that seldom wave their boughs,
And sea-green olives with their grateful fruit,
And elms dragging along the twisted vines,
Which drop their berries as they follow fast,
And blackthorn bushes with their infant race
Of blushing rose-blooms; beeches, to lovers dear,
And weeping willow trees; all swift or slow,
As their huge boughs or lighter dress permit,
Have circled in his throne, and Earth herself
Has sent from her maternal breast a growth
Of starlike flowers and herbs of odour sweet,
To pave the temple that his poesy
Has framed, while near his feet grim lions couch,
And kids, fearless from love, creep near his lair.
Even the blind worms seem to feel the sound.
The birds are silent, hanging down their heads,
Perched on the lowest branches of the trees;
Not even the nightingale intrudes a note
In rivalry, but all entranced she listens.

FIORDISPINA.

(Published in part (lines 11-30) by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824; in full (from the Boscombe manuscript) by Dr. Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862.)

The season was the childhood of sweet June,
Whose sunny hours from morning until noon
Went creeping through the day with silent feet,
Each with its load of pleasure; slow yet sweet;
Like the long years of blest Eternity
Never to be developed. Joy to thee,
Fiordispina and thy Cosimo,
For thou the wonders of the depth canst know
Of this unfathomable flood of hours,
Sparkling beneath the heaven which embowers —

…

They were two cousins, almost like to twins,
Except that from the catalogue of sins
Nature had rased their love — which could not be
But by dissevering their nativity.
And so they grew together like two flowers
Upon one stem, which the same beams and showers
Lull or awaken in their purple prime,
Which the same hand will gather — the same clime
Shake with decay. This fair day smiles to see
All those who love — and who e'er loved like thee,
Fiordispina? Scarcely Cosimo,
Within whose bosom and whose brain now glow
The ardours of a vision which obscure
The very idol of its portraiture.
He faints, dissolved into a sea of love;
But thou art as a planet sphered above;
But thou art Love itself — ruling the motion

Of his subjected spirit: such emotion
Must end in sin and sorrow, if sweet May
Had not brought forth this morn — your wedding-day.

…

‘Lie there; sleep awhile in your own dew,
Ye faint-eyed children of the … Hours,’
Fiordispina said, and threw the flowers
Which she had from the breathing —

…

A table near of polished porphyry.
They seemed to wear a beauty from the eye
That looked on them — a fragrance from the touch
Whose warmth … checked their life; a light such
As sleepers wear, lulled by the voice they love, which did reprove
The childish pity that she felt for them,
And a … remorse that from their stem
She had divided such fair shapes … made
A feeling in the … which was a shade
Of gentle beauty on the flowers: there lay
All gems that make the earth’s dark bosom gay.
… rods of myrtle-buds and lemon-blooms,
And that leaf tinted lightly which assumes
The livery of unremembered snow —
Violets whose eyes have drunk —

…

Fiordispina and her nurse are now
Upon the steps of the high portico,
Under the withered arm of Media
She flings her glowing arm

…

… step by step and stair by stair,
That withered woman, gray and white and brown —
More like a trunk by lichens overgrown
Than anything which once could have been human.
And ever as she goes the palsied woman

…

‘How slow and painfully you seem to walk,
Poor Media! you tire yourself with talk.’
‘And well it may,
Fiordispina, dearest — well-a-day!
You are hastening to a marriage-bed;
I to the grave!’—’And if my love were dead,
Unless my heart deceives me, I would lie
Beside him in my shroud as willingly
As now in the gay night-dress Lilla wrought.’
‘Fie, child! Let that unseasonable thought
Not be remembered till it snows in June;
Such fancies are a music out of tune
With the sweet dance your heart must keep to-night.
What! would you take all beauty and delight
Back to the Paradise from which you sprung,
And leave to grosser mortals? —
And say, sweet lamb, would you not learn the sweet
And subtle mystery by which spirits meet?
Who knows whether the loving game is played,
When, once of mortal *(vesture)* disarrayed,
The naked soul goes wandering here and there
Through the wide deserts of Elysian air?
The violet dies not till it’ —

TIME LONG PAST.

(Published by Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1870. This is one of three poems (cf. "Love's Philosophy" and "Good-Night") transcribed by Shelley in a copy of Leigh Hunt's "Literary Pocket-Book" for 1819 presented by him to Miss Sophia Stacey, December 29, 1820.)

1.
Like the ghost of a dear friend dead
Is Time long past.
A tone which is now forever fled,
A hope which is now forever past,
A love so sweet it could not last,
Was Time long past.

2.
There were sweet dreams in the night
Of Time long past:
And, was it sadness or delight,
Each day a shadow onward cast
Which made us wish it yet might last —
That Time long past.

3.
There is regret, almost remorse,
For Time long past.
'Tis like a child's beloved corse
A father watches, till at last
Beauty is like remembrance, cast
From Time long past.

THE DESERTS OF DIM SLEEP. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1870.)

I went into the deserts of dim sleep —
That world which, like an unknown wilderness,
Bounds this with its recesses wide and deep —

THE VIEWLESS AND INVISIBLE CONSEQUENCE. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1870.)

The viewless and invisible Consequence
Watches thy goings-out, and comings-in,
And…hovers o'er thy guilty sleep,
Unveiling every new-born deed, and thoughts
More ghastly than those deeds —

A SERPENT-FACE. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1870.)

His face was like a snake's — wrinkled and loose
And withered —

DEATH IN LIFE. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Dr. Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862.)

My head is heavy, my limbs are weary,
And it is not life that makes me move.

SUCH HOPE, AS IS THE SICK DESPAIR OF GOOD. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Dr. Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862.)

Such hope, as is the sick despair of good,
Such fear, as is the certainty of ill,
Such doubt, as is pale Expectation's food
Turned while she tastes to poison, when the will
Is powerless, and the spirit…

ALAS! THIS IS NOT WHAT I THOUGHT LIFE WAS. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition. This fragment is joined by Forman with that immediately preceding.)

Alas! this is not what I thought life was.
I knew that there were crimes and evil men,
Misery and hate; nor did I hope to pass
Untouched by suffering, through the rugged glen.
In mine own heart I saw as in a glass
The hearts of others … And when
I went among my kind, with triple brass
Of calm endurance my weak breast I armed,
To bear scorn, fear, and hate, a woful mass!

MILTON'S SPIRIT. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1870.)

I dreamed that Milton's spirit rose, and took
From life's green tree his Uranian lute;
And from his touch sweet thunder flowed, and shook
All human things built in contempt of man, —
And sanguine thrones and impious altars quaked,
Prisons and citadels…

UNRISEN SPLENDOUR OF THE BRIGHTEST SUN. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Dr. Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862.)

Unrisen splendour of the brightest sun,
To rise upon our darkness, if the star
Now beckoning thee out of thy misty throne
Could thaw the clouds which wage an obscure war
With thy young brightness!

PATER OMNIPOTENS. (FRAGMENT)

(Edited from manuscript Shelley E 4 in the Bodleian Library, and published by Mr. C.D. Locock, "Examination" etc., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1903. Here placed conjecturally amongst the compositions of 1820, but of uncertain date, and belonging possibly to 1819 or a still earlier year.)

Serene in his unconquerable might
Endued*(,)* the Almighty King, his steadfast throne
Encompassed unapproachably with power
And darkness and deep solitude an awe
Stood like a black cloud on some aery cliff
Embosoming its lightning — in his sight
Unnumbered glorious spirits trembling stood
Like slaves before their Lord — prostrate around
Heaven's multitudes hymned everlasting praise.

TO THE MIND OF MAN. (FRAGMENT)

(Edited, published and here placed as the preceding.)

Thou living light that in thy rainbow hues
Clothest this naked world; and over Sea
And Earth and air, and all the shapes that be
In peopled darkness of this wondrous world
The Spirit of thy glory dost diffuse
… truth … thou Vital Flame
Mysterious thought that in this mortal frame
Of things, with unextinguished lustre burnest
Now pale and faint now high to Heaven upcurled
That eer as thou dost languish still returnest
And ever
Before the … before the Pyramids

So soon as from the Earth formless and rude
One living step had chased drear Solitude
Thou wert, Thought; thy brightness charmed the lids
Of the vast snake Eternity, who kept
The tree of good and evil. —

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1821.

DIRGE FOR THE YEAR.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824, and dated January 1, 1821.)

1.
Orphan Hours, the Year is dead,
Come and sigh, come and weep!
Merry Hours, smile instead,
For the Year is but asleep.
See, it smiles as it is sleeping,
Mocking your untimely weeping.

2.
As an earthquake rocks a corse
In its coffin in the clay,
So White Winter, that rough nurse,
Rocks the death-cold Year to-day;
Solemn Hours! wail aloud
For your mother in her shroud.

3.
As the wild air stirs and sways
The tree-swung cradle of a child,
So the breath of these rude days
Rocks the Year: — be calm and mild,
Trembling Hours, she will arise
With new love within her eyes.

4.
January gray is here,
Like a sexton by her grave;
February bears the bier,
March with grief doth howl and rave,
And April weeps — but, O ye Hours!
Follow with May's fairest flowers.

TO NIGHT.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.
There is a transcript in the Harvard manuscript book.)

1.
Swiftly walk o'er the western wave,
Spirit of Night!
Out of the misty eastern cave,
Where, all the long and lone daylight,
Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear,
'Which make thee terrible and dear, —
Swift be thy flight!

2.
Wrap thy form in a mantle gray,
Star-inwrought!
Blind with thine hair the eyes of Day;
Kiss her until she be wearied out,
Then wander o'er city, and sea, and land,
Touching all with thine opiate wand —
Come, long-sought!

3.
When I arose and saw the dawn,
I sighed for thee;
When light rode high, and the dew was gone,
And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,
And the weary Day turned to his rest,
Lingering like an unloved guest, I sighed for thee.

4.
Thy brother Death came, and cried,
Wouldst thou me?
Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,
Murmured like a noontide bee,
Shall I nestle near thy side?

Wouldst thou me? — And I replied,
No, not thee!

5.
Death will come when thou art dead,
Soon, too soon —
Sleep will come when thou art fled;
Of neither would I ask the boon
I ask of thee, beloved Night —
Swift be thine approaching flight,
Come soon, soon!

TIME.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.)

Unfathomable Sea! whose waves are years,
Ocean of Time, whose waters of deep woe
Are brackish with the salt of human tears!
Thou shoreless flood, which in thy ebb and flow
Claspest the limits of mortality,
And sick of prey, yet howling on for more,
Vomitest thy wrecks on its inhospitable shore;
Treacherous in calm, and terrible in storm,
Who shall put forth on thee,
Unfathomable Sea?

LINES.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.)

1.
Far, far away, O ye
Halcyons of Memory,
Seek some far calmer nest
Than this abandoned breast!
No news of your false spring
To my heart's winter bring,
Once having gone, in vain
Ye come again.

2.
Vultures, who build your bowers
High in the Future's towers,
Withered hopes on hopes are spread!
Dying joys, choked by the dead,
Will serve your beaks for prey
Many a day.

FROM THE ARABIC: AN IMITATION.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824. There is an intermediate draft amongst the Bodleian manuscripts. See Locock, "Examination", etc., 1903, page 13.)

1.
My faint spirit was sitting in the light
Of thy looks, my love;
It panted for thee like the hind at noon
For the brooks, my love.
Thy barb whose hoofs outspeed the tempest's flight
Bore thee far from me;
My heart, for my weak feet were weary soon,
Did companion thee.

2.
Ah! fleeter far than fleetest storm or steed
Or the death they bear,
The heart which tender thought clothes like a dove
With the wings of care;
In the battle, in the darkness, in the need,
Shall mine cling to thee,
Nor claim one smile for all the comfort, love,
It may bring to thee.

TO EMILIA VIVIANI.

(Published, (1) by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824; (2, 1) by Dr. Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862; (2, 2 and 3) by H. Buxton Forman, "Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1876.)

1.
Madonna, wherefore hast thou sent to me
Sweet-basil and mignonette?
Embleming love and health, which never yet
In the same wreath might be.
Alas, and they are wet!
Is it with thy kisses or thy tears?
For never rain or dew
Such fragrance drew
From plant or flower — the very doubt endears
My sadness ever new,
The sighs I breathe, the tears I shed for thee.

2.
Send the stars light, but send not love to me,
In whom love ever made
Health like a heap of embers soon to fade —

THE FUGITIVES.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems". 1824.)

1.
The waters are flashing,
The white hail is dashing,
The lightnings are glancing,
The hoar-spray is dancing —
Away!

The whirlwind is rolling,
The thunder is tolling,
The forest is swinging,
The minster bells ringing —
Come away!

The Earth is like Ocean,
Wreck-strewn and in motion:
Bird, beast, man and worm
Have crept out of the storm —
Come away!

2.
'Our boat has one sail
And the helmsman is pale; —
A bold pilot I trow,
Who should follow us now,' —
Shouted he —

And she cried: 'Ply the oar!
Put off gaily from shore!' —
As she spoke, bolts of death
Mixed with hail, specked their path
O'er the sea.

And from isle, tower and rock,
The blue beacon-cloud broke,
And though dumb in the blast,
The red cannon flashed fast
From the lee.

3.
And ‘Fear’st thou?’ and ‘Fear’st thou?’
And Seest thou?’ and ‘Hear’st thou?’
And ‘Drive we not free
O’er the terrible sea,
I and thou?’

One boat-cloak did cover
The loved and the lover —
Their blood beats one measure,
They murmur proud pleasure
Soft and low; —

While around the lashed Ocean,
Like mountains in motion,
Is withdrawn and uplifted,
Sunk, shattered and shifted
To and fro.

4.
In the court of the fortress
Beside the pale portress,
Like a bloodhound well beaten
The bridegroom stands, eaten
By shame;

On the topmost watch-turret,
As a death-boding spirit
Stands the gray tyrant father,
To his voice the mad weather
Seems tame;

And with curses as wild
As e’er clung to child,
He devotes to the blast,
The best, loveliest and last
Of his name!

TO — .

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.)

Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory —
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken.

Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,
Are heaped for the beloved's bed;
And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,
Love itself shall slumber on.

SONG.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.
There is a transcript in the Harvard manuscript book.)

1.
Rarely, rarely, comest thou,
Spirit of Delight!
Wherefore hast thou left me now
Many a day and night?
Many a weary night and day
'Tis since thou art fled away.

2.
How shall ever one like me
Win thee back again?
With the joyous and the free
Thou wilt scoff at pain.
Spirit false! thou hast forgot
All but those who need thee not.

3.
As a lizard with the shade
Of a trembling leaf,
Thou with sorrow art dismayed;
Even the sighs of grief
Reproach thee, that thou art not near,
And reproach thou wilt not hear.

4.
Let me set my mournful ditty
To a merry measure;
Thou wilt never come for pity,
Thou wilt come for pleasure;
Pity then will cut away
Those cruel wings, and thou wilt stay.

5.
I love all that thou lovest,
Spirit of Delight!
The fresh Earth in new leaves dressed,
And the starry night;
Autumn evening, and the morn
When the golden mists are born.

6.
I love snow, and all the forms
Of the radiant frost;
I love waves, and winds, and storms,
Everything almost
Which is Nature's, and may be
Untainted by man's misery.

7.
I love tranquil solitude,
And such society
As is quiet, wise, and good
Between thee and me
What difference? but thou dost possess
The things I seek, not love them less.

8.
I love Love — though he has wings,
And like light can flee,
But above all other things,
Spirit, I love thee —
Thou art love and life! Oh, come,
Make once more my heart thy home.

MUTABILITY.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.
There is a fair draft amongst the Boscombe manuscripts.)

1.
The flower that smiles to-day
To-morrow dies;
All that we wish to stay
Tempts and then flies.
What is this world's delight?
Lightning that mocks the night,
Brief even as bright.

2.
Virtue, how frail it is!
Friendship how rare!
Love, how it sells poor bliss
For proud despair!
But we, though soon they fall,
Survive their joy, and all
Which ours we call.

3.
Whilst skies are blue and bright,
Whilst flowers are gay,
Whilst eyes that change ere night
Make glad the day;
Whilst yet the calm hours creep,
Dream thou — and from thy sleep
Then wake to weep.

LINES WRITTEN ON HEARING THE NEWS OF THE DEATH OF NAPOLEON.

(Published with "Hellas", 1821.)

What! alive and so bold, O Earth?
Art thou not overbold?
What! leapest thou forth as of old
In the light of thy morning mirth,
The last of the flock of the starry fold?
Ha! leapest thou forth as of old?
Are not the limbs still when the ghost is fled,
And canst thou move, Napoleon being dead?

How! is not thy quick heart cold?
What spark is alive on thy hearth?
How! is not HIS death-knell knolled?
And livest THOU still, Mother Earth?
Thou wert warming thy fingers old
O'er the embers covered and cold
Of that most fiery spirit, when it fled —
What, Mother, do you laugh now he is dead?

'Who has known me of old,' replied Earth,
'Or who has my story told?
It is thou who art overbold.'
And the lightning of scorn laughed forth
As she sung, 'To my bosom I fold
All my sons when their knell is knolled,
And so with living motion all are fed,
And the quick spring like weeds out of the dead.

'Still alive and still bold,' shouted Earth,
'I grow bolder and still more bold.
The dead fill me ten thousandfold
Fuller of speed, and splendour, and mirth.

I was cloudy, and sullen, and cold,
Like a frozen chaos uprolled,
Till by the spirit of the mighty dead
My heart grew warm. I feed on whom I fed.

‘Ay, alive and still bold.’ muttered Earth,
‘Napoleon’s fierce spirit rolled,
In terror and blood and gold,
A torrent of ruin to death from his birth.
Leave the millions who follow to mould
The metal before it be cold;
And weave into his shame, which like the dead
Shrouds me, the hopes that from his glory fled.’

SONNET: POLITICAL GREATNESS.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824. There is a transcript, headed "Sonnet to the Republic of Benevento", in the Harvard manuscript book.)

Nor happiness, nor majesty, nor fame,
Nor peace, nor strength, nor skill in arms or arts,
Shepherd those herds whom tyranny makes tame;
Verse echoes not one beating of their hearts,
History is but the shadow of their shame,
Art veils her glass, or from the pageant starts
As to oblivion their blind millions fleet,
Staining that Heaven with obscene imagery
Of their own likeness. What are numbers knit
By force or custom? Man who man would be,
Must rule the empire of himself; in it
Must be supreme, establishing his throne
On vanquished will, quelling the anarchy
Of hopes and fears, being himself alone.

THE AZIOLA.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley in "The Keepsake", 1829.)

1.
'Do you not hear the Aziola cry?
Methinks she must be nigh,'
Said Mary, as we sate
In dusk, ere stars were lit, or candles brought;
And I, who thought
This Aziola was some tedious woman,
Asked, 'Who is Aziola?' How elate
I felt to know that it was nothing human,
No mockery of myself to fear or hate:
And Mary saw my soul,
And laughed, and said, 'Disquiet yourself not;
'Tis nothing but a little downy owl.'

2.
Sad Aziola! many an eventide
Thy music I had heard
By wood and stream, meadow and mountain-side,
And fields and marshes wide, —
Such as nor voice, nor lute, nor wind, nor bird,
The soul ever stirred;
Unlike and far sweeter than them all.
Sad Aziola! from that moment I
Loved thee and thy sad cry.

A LAMENT.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.)

1.
O world! O life! O time!
On whose last steps I climb,
Trembling at that where I had stood before;
When will return the glory of your prime?
No more — Oh, never more!

2.
Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight;
Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar,
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more — Oh, never more!

REMEMBRANCE.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824, where it is entitled "A Lament". Three manuscript copies are extant: The Trelawny manuscript ("Remembrance"), the Harvard manuscript ("Song") and the Houghton manuscript — the last written by Shelley on a flyleaf of a copy of "Adonais".)

1.
Swifter far than summer's flight —
Swifter far than youth's delight —
Swifter far than happy night,
Art thou come and gone —
As the earth when leaves are dead,
As the night when sleep is sped,
As the heart when joy is fled,
I am left lone, alone.

2.
The swallow summer comes again —
The owlet night resumes her reign —
But the wild-swan youth is fain
To fly with thee, false as thou. —
My heart each day desires the morrow;
Sleep itself is turned to sorrow;
Vainly would my winter borrow
Sunny leaves from any bough.

3.
Lilies for a bridal bed —
Roses for a matron's head —
Violets for a maiden dead —
Pansies let MY flowers be:
On the living grave I bear
Scatter them without a tear —

Let no friend, however dear,
Waste one hope, one fear for me.

TO EDWARD WILLIAMS.

(Published in Ascham's edition of the "Poems", 1834. There is a copy amongst the Trelawny manuscripts.)

1.
The serpent is shut out from Paradise.
The wounded deer must seek the herb no more
In which its heart-cure lies:
The widowed dove must cease to haunt a bower
Like that from which its mate with feigned sighs
Fled in the April hour.
I too must seldom seek again
Near happy friends a mitigated pain.

2.
Of hatred I am proud, — with scorn content;
Indifference, that once hurt me, now is grown
Itself indifferent;
But, not to speak of love, pity alone
Can break a spirit already more than bent.
The miserable one
Turns the mind's poison into food, —
Its medicine is tears, — its evil good.

3.
Therefore, if now I see you seldomer,
Dear friends, dear FRIEND! know that I only fly
Your looks, because they stir
Griefs that should sleep, and hopes that cannot die:
The very comfort that they minister
I scarce can bear, yet I,
So deeply is the arrow gone,
Should quickly perish if it were withdrawn.

4.
When I return to my cold home, you ask

Why I am not as I have ever been.
YOU spoil me for the task
Of acting a forced part in life's dull scene, —
Of wearing on my brow the idle mask
Of author, great or mean,
In the world's carnival. I sought
Peace thus, and but in you I found it not.

5.
Full half an hour, to-day, I tried my lot
With various flowers, and every one still said,
'She loves me — loves me not.'
And if this meant a vision long since fled —
If it meant fortune, fame, or peace of thought —
If it meant, — but I dread
To speak what you may know too well:
Still there was truth in the sad oracle.

6.
The crane o'er seas and forests seeks her home;
No bird so wild but has its quiet nest,
When it no more would roam;
The sleepless billows on the ocean's breast
Break like a bursting heart, and die in foam,
And thus at length find rest:
Doubtless there is a place of peace
Where MY weak heart and all its throbs will cease.

7.
I asked her, yesterday, if she believed
That I had resolution. One who HAD
Would ne'er have thus relieved
His heart with words, — but what his judgement bade
Would do, and leave the scorner unrelieved.
These verses are too sad
To send to you, but that I know,
Happy yourself, you feel another's woe.

TO — .

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.)

1.
One word is too often profaned
For me to profane it,
One feeling too falsely disdained
For thee to disdain it;
One hope is too like despair
For prudence to smother,
And pity from thee more dear
Than that from another.

2.
I can give not what men call love,
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above
And the Heavens reject not, —
The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow?

TO — .

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.
There is a Boscombe manuscript.)

1.
When passion's trance is overpast,
If tenderness and truth could last,
Or live, whilst all wild feelings keep
Some mortal slumber, dark and deep,
I should not weep, I should not weep!

2.
It were enough to feel, to see,
Thy soft eyes gazing tenderly,
And dream the rest — and burn and be
The secret food of fires unseen,
Couldst thou but be as thou hast been,

3.
After the slumber of the year
The woodland violets reappear;
All things revive in field or grove,
And sky and sea, but two, which move
And form all others, life and love.

A BRIDAL SONG.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.)

1.
The golden gates of Sleep unbar
Where Strength and Beauty, met together,
Kindle their image like a star
In a sea of glassy weather!
Night, with all thy stars look down, —
Darkness, weep thy holiest dew, —
Never smiled the inconstant moon
On a pair so true.
Let eyes not see their own delight; —
Haste, swift Hour, and thy flight
Oft renew.

2.
Fairies, sprites, and angels, keep her!
Holy stars, permit no wrong!
And return to wake the sleeper,
Dawn, — ere it be long!
O joy! O fear! what will be done
In the absence of the sun!
Come along!

EPITHALAMIUM.

ANOTHER VERSION OF THE PRECEDING.

(Published by Medwin, "Life of Shelley", 1847.)

Night, with all thine eyes look down!
Darkness shed its holiest dew!
When ever smiled the inconstant moon
On a pair so true?
Hence, coy hour! and quench thy light,
Lest eyes see their own delight!
Hence, swift hour! and thy loved flight
Oft renew.

BOYS:
O joy! O fear! what may be done
In the absence of the sun?
Come along!
The golden gates of sleep unbar!
When strength and beauty meet together,
Kindles their image like a star
In a sea of glassy weather.
Hence, coy hour! and quench thy light,
Lest eyes see their own delight!
Hence, swift hour! and thy loved flight
Oft renew.

GIRLS:
O joy! O fear! what may be done
In the absence of the sun?
Come along!
Fairies! sprites! and angels, keep her!
Holiest powers, permit no wrong!
And return, to wake the sleeper,
Dawn, ere it be long.
Hence, swift hour! and quench thy light,
Lest eyes see their own delight!

Hence, coy hour! and thy loved flight
Oft renew.

BOYS AND GIRLS:
O joy! O fear! what will be done
In the absence of the sun?
Come along!

ANOTHER VERSION OF THE SAME.

(Published by Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1870, from the Trelawny manuscript of Edward Williams's play, "The Promise: or, A Year, a Month, and a Day".)

BOYS SING:
Night! with all thine eyes look down!
Darkness! weep thy holiest dew!
Never smiled the inconstant moon
On a pair so true.
Haste, coy hour! and quench all light,
Lest eyes see their own delight!
Haste, swift hour! and thy loved flight
Oft renew!

GIRLS SING:
Fairies, sprites, and angels, keep her!
Holy stars! permit no wrong!
And return, to wake the sleeper,
Dawn, ere it be long!
O joy! O fear! there is not one
Of us can guess what may be done
In the absence of the sun: —
Come along!

BOYS:
Oh! linger long, thou envious eastern lamp
In the damp
Caves of the deep!

GIRLS:
Nay, return, Vesper! urge thy lazy car!
Swift unbar
The gates of Sleep!

CHORUS:
The golden gate of Sleep unbar,
When Strength and Beauty, met together,
Kindle their image, like a star
In a sea of glassy weather.
May the purple mist of love
Round them rise, and with them move,
Nourishing each tender gem
Which, like flowers, will burst from them.
As the fruit is to the tree
May their children ever be!

LOVE, HOPE, DESIRE, AND FEAR.

(Published by Dr. Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862. 'A very free translation of Brunetto Latini's "Tesoretto", lines 81-154.' — A.C. Bradley.)

…

And many there were hurt by that strong boy,
His name, they said, was Pleasure,
And near him stood, glorious beyond measure
Four Ladies who possess all empery
In earth and air and sea,
Nothing that lives from their award is free.
Their names will I declare to thee,
Love, Hope, Desire, and Fear,
And they the regents are
Of the four elements that frame the heart,
And each diversely exercised her art
By force or circumstance or sleight
To prove her dreadful might
Upon that poor domain.
Desire presented her *(false)* glass, and then
The spirit dwelling there
Was spellbound to embrace what seemed so fair
Within that magic mirror,
And dazed by that bright error,
It would have scorned the *(shafts)* of the avenger
And death, and penitence, and danger,
Had not then silent Fear
Touched with her palsying spear,
So that as if a frozen torrent
The blood was curdled in its current;
It dared not speak, even in look or motion,
But chained within itself its proud devotion.
Between Desire and Fear thou wert
A wretched thing, poor heart!

Sad was his life who bore thee in his breast,
Wild bird for that weak nest.
Till Love even from fierce Desire it bought,
And from the very wound of tender thought
Drew solace, and the pity of sweet eyes
Gave strength to bear those gentle agonies,
Surmount the loss, the terror, and the sorrow.
Then Hope approached, she who can borrow
For poor to-day, from rich tomorrow,
And Fear withdrew, as night when day
Descends upon the orient ray,
And after long and vain endurance
The poor heart woke to her assurance.
— At one birth these four were born
With the world's forgotten morn,
And from Pleasure still they hold
All it circles, as of old.
When, as summer lures the swallow,
Pleasure lures the heart to follow —
O weak heart of little wit!
The fair hand that wounded it,
Seeking, like a panting hare,
Refuge in the lynx's lair,
Love, Desire, Hope, and Fear,
Ever will be near.

FRAGMENTS WRITTEN FOR HELLAS.

(Published by Dr. Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862.)

1.
Fairest of the Destinies,
Disarray thy dazzling eyes:
Keener far thy lightnings are
Than the winged *(bolts)* thou bearest,
And the smile thou wearest
Wraps thee as a star
Is wrapped in light.

2.
Could Arethuse to her forsaken urn
From Alpheus and the bitter Doris run,
Or could the morning shafts of purest light
Again into the quivers of the Sun
Be gathered — could one thought from its wild flight
Return into the temple of the brain
Without a change, without a stain, —
Could aught that is, ever again
Be what it once has ceased to be,
Greece might again be free!

3.
A star has fallen upon the earth
Mid the benighted nations,
A quenchless atom of immortal light,
A living spark of Night,
A cresset shaken from the constellations.
Swifter than the thunder fell
To the heart of Earth, the well
Where its pulses flow and beat,
And unextinct in that cold source
Burns, and on … course

Guides the sphere which is its prison,
Like an angelic spirit pent
In a form of mortal birth,
Till, as a spirit half-arisen
Shatters its charnel, it has rent,
In the rapture of its mirth,
The thin and painted garment of the Earth,
Ruining its chaos — a fierce breath
Consuming all its forms of living death.

I WOULD NOT BE A KING. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 2nd edition.)

I would not be a king — enough
Of woe it is to love;
The path to power is steep and rough,
And tempests reign above.
I would not climb the imperial throne;
'Tis built on ice which fortune's sun
Thaws in the height of noon.
Then farewell, king, yet were I one,
Care would not come so soon.
Would he and I were far away
Keeping flocks on Himalay!

GINEVRA.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824, and dated 'Pisa, 1821.')

Wild, pale, and wonder-stricken, even as one
Who staggers forth into the air and sun
From the dark chamber of a mortal fever,
Bewildered, and incapable, and ever
Fancying strange comments in her dizzy brain
Of usual shapes, till the familiar train
Of objects and of persons passed like things
Strange as a dreamer's mad imaginings,
Ginevra from the nuptial altar went;
The vows to which her lips had sworn assent
Rung in her brain still with a jarring din,
Deafening the lost intelligence within.

And so she moved under the bridal veil,
Which made the paleness of her cheek more pale,
And deepened the faint crimson of her mouth,
And darkened her dark locks, as moonlight doth, —
And of the gold and jewels glittering there
She scarce felt conscious, — but the weary glare
Lay like a chaos of unwelcome light,
Vexing the sense with gorgeous undelight,
A moonbeam in the shadow of a cloud
Was less heavenly fair — her face was bowed,
And as she passed, the diamonds in her hair
Were mirrored in the polished marble stair
Which led from the cathedral to the street;
And ever as she went her light fair feet
Erased these images.

The bride-maidens who round her thronging came,
Some with a sense of self-rebuke and shame,

Envying the unenviable; and others
Making the joy which should have been another's
Their own by gentle sympathy; and some
Sighing to think of an unhappy home:
Some few admiring what can ever lure
Maidens to leave the heaven serene and pure
Of parents' smiles for life's great cheat; a thing
Bitter to taste, sweet in imagining.

But they are all dispersed — and, lo! she stands
Looking in idle grief on her white hands,
Alone within the garden now her own;
And through the sunny air, with jangling tone,
The music of the merry marriage-bells,
Killing the azure silence, sinks and swells; —
Absorbed like one within a dream who dreams
That he is dreaming, until slumber seems
A mockery of itself — when suddenly
Antonio stood before her, pale as she.
With agony, with sorrow, and with pride,
He lifted his wan eyes upon the bride,
And said—'Is this thy faith?' and then as one
Whose sleeping face is stricken by the sun
With light like a harsh voice, which bids him rise
And look upon his day of life with eyes
Which weep in vain that they can dream no more,
Ginevra saw her lover, and forbore
To shriek or faint, and checked the stifling blood
Rushing upon her heart, and unsubdued
Said—'Friend, if earthly violence or ill,
Suspicion, doubt, or the tyrannic will
Of parents, chance or custom, time or change,
Or circumstance, or terror, or revenge,
Or wildered looks, or words, or evil speech,
With all their stings and venom can impeach
Our love, — we love not: — if the grave which hides
The victim from the tyrant, and divides

The cheek that whitens from the eyes that dart
Imperious inquisition to the heart
That is another's, could dissever ours,
We love not.'—'What! do not the silent hours
Beckon thee to Gherardi's bridal bed?
Is not that ring' — a pledge, he would have said,
Of broken vows, but she with patient look
The golden circle from her finger took,
And said—'Accept this token of my faith,
The pledge of vows to be absolved by death;
And I am dead or shall be soon — my knell
Will mix its music with that merry bell,
Does it not sound as if they sweetly said
"We toll a corpse out of the marriage-bed"?
The flowers upon my bridal chamber strewn
Will serve unfaded for my bier — so soon
That even the dying violet will not die
Before Ginevra.' The strong fantasy
Had made her accents weaker and more weak,
And quenched the crimson life upon her cheek,
And glazed her eyes, and spread an atmosphere
Round her, which chilled the burning noon with fear,
Making her but an image of the thought
Which, like a prophet or a shadow, brought
News of the terrors of the coming time.
Like an accuser branded with the crime
He would have cast on a beloved friend,
Whose dying eyes reproach not to the end
The pale betrayer — he then with vain repentance
Would share, he cannot now avert, the sentence —
Antonio stood and would have spoken, when
The compound voice of women and of men
Was heard approaching; he retired, while she
Was led amid the admiring company
Back to the palace, — and her maidens soon
Changed her attire for the afternoon,
And left her at her own request to keep

An hour of quiet rest: — like one asleep
With open eyes and folded hands she lay,
Pale in the light of the declining day.

Meanwhile the day sinks fast, the sun is set,
And in the lighted hall the guests are met;
The beautiful looked lovelier in the light
Of love, and admiration, and delight
Reflected from a thousand hearts and eyes,
Kindling a momentary Paradise.
This crowd is safer than the silent wood,
Where love's own doubts disturb the solitude;
On frozen hearts the fiery rain of wine
Falls, and the dew of music more divine
Tempers the deep emotions of the time
To spirits cradled in a sunny clime: —
How many meet, who never yet have met,
To part too soon, but never to forget.
How many saw the beauty, power and wit
Of looks and words which ne'er enchanted yet;
But life's familiar veil was now withdrawn,
As the world leaps before an earthquake's dawn,
And unprophetic of the coming hours,
The matin winds from the expanded flowers
Scatter their hoarded incense, and awaken
The earth, until the dewy sleep is shaken
From every living heart which it possesses,
Through seas and winds, cities and wildernesses,
As if the future and the past were all
Treasured i' the instant; — so Gherardi's hall
Laughed in the mirth of its lord's festival,
Till some one asked—'Where is the Bride?' And then
A bridesmaid went, — and ere she came again
A silence fell upon the guests — a pause
Of expectation, as when beauty awes
All hearts with its approach, though unbeheld;
Then wonder, and then fear that wonder quelled; —

For whispers passed from mouth to ear which drew
The colour from the hearer's cheeks, and flew
Louder and swifter round the company;
And then Gherardi entered with an eye
Of ostentatious trouble, and a crowd
Surrounded him, and some were weeping loud.

They found Ginevra dead! if it be death
To lie without motion, or pulse, or breath,
With waxen cheeks, and limbs cold, stiff, and white,
And open eyes, whose fixed and glassy light
Mocked at the speculation they had owned.
If it be death, when there is felt around
A smell of clay, a pale and icy glare,
And silence, and a sense that lifts the hair
From the scalp to the ankles, as it were
Corruption from the spirit passing forth,
And giving all it shrouded to the earth,
And leaving as swift lightning in its flight
Ashes, and smoke, and darkness: in our night
Of thought we know thus much of death, — no more
Than the unborn dream of our life before
Their barks are wrecked on its inhospitable shore.
The marriage feast and its solemnity
Was turned to funeral pomp — the company,
With heavy hearts and looks, broke up; nor they
Who loved the dead went weeping on their way
Alone, but sorrow mixed with sad surprise
Loosened the springs of pity in all eyes,
On which that form, whose fate they weep in vain,
Will never, thought they, kindle smiles again.
The lamps which, half extinguished in their haste,
Gleamed few and faint o'er the abandoned feast,
Showed as it were within the vaulted room
A cloud of sorrow hanging, as if gloom
Had passed out of men's minds into the air.
Some few yet stood around Gherardi there,

Friends and relations of the dead, — and he,
A loveless man, accepted torpidly
The consolation that he wanted not;
Awe in the place of grief within him wrought.
Their whispers made the solemn silence seem
More still — some wept,…
Some melted into tears without a sob,
And some with hearts that might be heard to throb
Leaned on the table and at intervals
Shuddered to hear through the deserted halls
And corridors the thrilling shrieks which came
Upon the breeze of night, that shook the flame
Of every torch and taper as it swept
From out the chamber where the women kept; —
Their tears fell on the dear companion cold
Of pleasures now departed; then was knolled
The bell of death, and soon the priests arrived,
And finding Death their penitent had shrived,
Returned like ravens from a corpse whereon
A vulture has just feasted to the bone.
And then the mourning women came. —

…

THE DIRGE.

Old winter was gone
In his weakness back to the mountains hoar,
And the spring came down
From the planet that hovers upon the shore

Where the sea of sunlight encroaches
On the limits of wintry night; —
If the land, and the air, and the sea,
Rejoice not when spring approaches,
We did not rejoice in thee,
Ginevra!

She is still, she is cold
On the bridal couch,
One step to the white deathbed,
And one to the bier,
And one to the charnel — and one, oh where?
The dark arrow fled
In the noon.

Ere the sun through heaven once more has rolled,
The rats in her heart
Will have made their nest,
And the worms be alive in her golden hair,
While the Spirit that guides the sun,
Sits throned in his flaming chair,
She shall sleep.

EVENING: PONTE AL MARE, PISA

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.
There is a draft amongst the Boscombe manuscripts.)

1.
The sun is set; the swallows are asleep;
The bats are flitting fast in the gray air;
The slow soft toads out of damp corners creep,
And evening's breath, wandering here and there
Over the quivering surface of the stream,
Wakes not one ripple from its summer dream.

2.
There is no dew on the dry grass to-night,
Nor damp within the shadow of the trees;
The wind is intermitting, dry, and light;
And in the inconstant motion of the breeze
The dust and straws are driven up and down,
And whirled about the pavement of the town.

3.
Within the surface of the fleeting river
The wrinkled image of the city lay,
Immovably unquiet, and forever
It trembles, but it never fades away;
Go to the…
You, being changed, will find it then as now.

4.
The chasm in which the sun has sunk is shut
By darkest barriers of cinereous cloud,
Like mountain over mountain huddled — but
Growing and moving upwards in a crowd,
And over it a space of watery blue,
Which the keen evening star is shining through..

THE BOAT ON THE SERCHIO.

(Published in part (lines 1-61, 88-118) by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824; revised and enlarged by Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1870.)

Our boat is asleep on Serchio's stream,
Its sails are folded like thoughts in a dream,
The helm sways idly, hither and thither;
Dominic, the boatman, has brought the mast,
And the oars, and the sails; but 'tis sleeping fast,
Like a beast, unconscious of its tether.

The stars burnt out in the pale blue air,
And the thin white moon lay withering there;
To tower, and cavern, and rift, and tree,
The owl and the bat fled drowsily.
Day had kindled the dewy woods,
And the rocks above and the stream below,
And the vapours in their multitudes,
And the Apennine's shroud of summer snow,
And clothed with light of aery gold
The mists in their eastern caves uprolled.

Day had awakened all things that be,
The lark and the thrush and the swallow free,
And the milkmaid's song and the mower's scythe
And the matin-bell and the mountain bee:
Fireflies were quenched on the dewy corn,
Glow-worms went out on the river's brim,
Like lamps which a student forgets to trim:
The beetle forgot to wind his horn,
The crickets were still in the meadow and hill:
Like a flock of rooks at a farmer's gun
Night's dreams and terrors, every one,

Fled from the brains which are their prey
From the lamp's death to the morning ray.

All rose to do the task He set to each,
Who shaped us to His ends and not our own;
The million rose to learn, and one to teach
What none yet ever knew or can be known.
And many rose
Whose woe was such that fear became desire; —
Melchior and Lionel were not among those;
They from the throng of men had stepped aside,
And made their home under the green hill-side.
It was that hill, whose intervening brow
Screens Lucca from the Pisan's envious eye,
Which the circumfluous plain waving below,
Like a wide lake of green fertility,
With streams and fields and marshes bare,
Divides from the far Apennines — which lie
Islanded in the immeasurable air.

'What think you, as she lies in her green cove,
Our little sleeping boat is dreaming of?'
'If morning dreams are true, why I should guess
That she was dreaming of our idleness,
And of the miles of watery way
We should have led her by this time of day.'-

'Never mind,' said Lionel,
'Give care to the winds, they can bear it well
About yon poplar-tops; and see
The white clouds are driving merrily,
And the stars we miss this morn will light
More willingly our return to-night. —
How it whistles, Dominic's long black hair!
List, my dear fellow; the breeze blows fair:
Hear how it sings into the air—'

—’Of us and of our lazy motions,’
Impatiently said Melchior,
‘If I can guess a boat’s emotions;
And how we ought, two hours before,
To have been the devil knows where.’
And then, in such transalpine Tuscan
As would have killed a Della-Cruscan,

…

So, Lionel according to his art
Weaving his idle words, Melchior said:
‘She dreams that we are not yet out of bed;
We’ll put a soul into her, and a heart
Which like a dove chased by a dove shall beat.’

…

‘Ay, heave the ballast overboard,
And stow the eatables in the aft locker.’
‘Would not this keg be best a little lowered?’
‘No, now all’s right.’ ‘Those bottles of warm tea —
(Give me some straw) — must be stowed tenderly;
Such as we used, in summer after six,
To cram in greatcoat pockets, and to mix
Hard eggs and radishes and rolls at Eton,
And, couched on stolen hay in those green harbours
Farmers called gaps, and we schoolboys called arbours,
Would feast till eight.’

…

With a bottle in one hand,
As if his very soul were at a stand
Lionel stood — when Melchior brought him steady: —
‘Sit at the helm — fasten this sheet — all ready!’

The chain is loosed, the sails are spread,
The living breath is fresh behind,
As with dews and sunrise fed,
Comes the laughing morning wind; —
The sails are full, the boat makes head
Against the Serchio's torrent fierce,
Then flags with intermitting course,
And hangs upon the wave, and stems
The tempest of the…
Which fervid from its mountain source
Shallow, smooth and strong doth come, —
Swift as fire, tempestuously
It sweeps into the affrighted sea;
In morning's smile its eddies coil,
Its billows sparkle, toss and boil,
Torturing all its quiet light
Into columns fierce and bright.

The Serchio, twisting forth
Between the marble barriers which it clove
At Ripafratta, leads through the dread chasm
The wave that died the death which lovers love,
Living in what it sought; as if this spasm
Had not yet passed, the toppling mountains cling,
But the clear stream in full enthusiasm
Pours itself on the plain, then wandering
Down one clear path of effluence crystalline
Sends its superfluous waves, that they may fling
At Arno's feet tribute of corn and wine;
Then, through the pestilential deserts wild
Of tangled marsh and woods of stunted pine,
It rushes to the Ocean.

MUSIC.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.)

1.
I pant for the music which is divine,
My heart in its thirst is a dying flower;
Pour forth the sound like enchanted wine,
Loosen the notes in a silver shower;
Like a herbless plain, for the gentle rain,
I gasp, I faint, till they wake again.

2.
Let me drink of the spirit of that sweet sound,
More, oh more, — I am thirsting yet;
It loosens the serpent which care has bound
Upon my heart to stifle it;
The dissolving strain, through every vein,
Passes into my heart and brain.

3.
As the scent of a violet withered up,
Which grew by the brink of a silver lake,
When the hot noon has drained its dewy cup,
And mist there was none its thirst to slake —
And the violet lay dead while the odour flew
On the wings of the wind o'er the waters blue —

4.
As one who drinks from a charmed cup
Of foaming, and sparkling, and murmuring wine,
Whom, a mighty Enchantress filling up,
Invites to love with her kiss divine…

SONNET TO BYRON.

(Published by Medwin, "The Shelley Papers", 1832 (lines 1-7), and "Life of Shelley", 1847 (lines 1-9, 12-14). Revised and completed from the Boscombe manuscript by Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1870.)

(I am afraid these verses will not please you, but)
If I esteemed you less, Envy would kill
Pleasure, and leave to Wonder and Despair
The ministration of the thoughts that fill
The mind which, like a worm whose life may share
A portion of the unapproachable,
Marks your creations rise as fast and fair
As perfect worlds at the Creator's will.

But such is my regard that nor your power
To soar above the heights where others *(climb)*,
Nor fame, that shadow of the unborn hour
Cast from the envious future on the time,
Move one regret for his unhonoured name
Who dares these words: — the worm beneath the sod
May lift itself in homage of the God.

FRAGMENT ON KEATS.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition — ED.)

ON KEATS, WHO DESIRED THAT ON HIS TOMB SHOULD BE INSCRIBED —

‘Here lieth One whose name was writ on water.
But, ere the breath that could erase it blew,
Death, in remorse for that fell slaughter,
Death, the immortalizing winter, flew
Athwart the stream, — and time’s printless torrent grew
A scroll of crystal, blazoning the name
Of Adonais!

METHOUGHT I WAS A BILLOW IN THE CROWD. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1870.)

Methought I was a billow in the crowd
Of common men, that stream without a shore,
That ocean which at once is deaf and loud;
That I, a man, stood amid many more
By a wayside…, which the aspect bore
Of some imperial metropolis,
Where mighty shapes — pyramid, dome, and tower —
Gleamed like a pile of crags —

TO-MORROW.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.)

Where art thou, beloved To-morrow?
When young and old, and strong and weak,
Rich and poor, through joy and sorrow,
Thy sweet smiles we ever seek, —
In thy place — ah! well-a-day!
We find the thing we fled — To-day.

STANZA.

(Published by Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1870. Connected by Dowden with the preceding.)

If I walk in Autumn's even
While the dead leaves pass,
If I look on Spring's soft heaven, —
Something is not there which was
Winter's wondrous frost and snow,
Summer's clouds, where are they now?

A WANDERER. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition.)

He wanders, like a day-appearing dream,
Through the dim wildernesses of the mind;
Through desert woods and tracts, which seem
Like ocean, homeless, boundless, unconfined.

LIFE ROUNDED WITH SLEEP. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 2nd edition.)

The babe is at peace within the womb;
The corpse is at rest within the tomb:
We begin in what we end.

I FAINT, I PERISH WITH MY LOVE!. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1870.)

I faint, I perish with my love! I grow
Frail as a cloud whose *(splendours)* pale
Under the evening's ever-changing glow:
I die like mist upon the gale,
And like a wave under the calm I fail.

THE LADY OF THE SOUTH. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1870.)

Faint with love, the Lady of the South
Lay in the paradise of Lebanon
Under a heaven of cedar boughs: the drouth
Of love was on her lips; the light was gone
Out of her eyes —

ZEPHYRUS THE AWAKENER. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1870.)

Come, thou awakener of the spirit's ocean,
Zephyr, whom to thy cloud or cave
No thought can trace! speed with thy gentle motion!

RAIN. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1870.)

The gentleness of rain was in the wind.

WHEN SOFT WINDS AND SUNNY SKIES. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition.)

When soft winds and sunny skies
With the green earth harmonize,
And the young and dewy dawn,
Bold as an unhunted fawn,
Up the windless heaven is gone, —
Laugh — for ambushed in the day, —
Clouds and whirlwinds watch their prey.

AND THAT I WALK THUS PROUDLY CROWNED. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition.)

And that I walk thus proudly crowned withal
Is that 'tis my distinction; if I fall,
I shall not weep out of the vital day,
To-morrow dust, nor wear a dull decay.

THE RUDE WIND IS SINGING. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition.)

The rude wind is singing
The dirge of the music dead;
The cold worms are clinging
Where kisses were lately fed.

GREAT SPIRIT. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1870.)

Great Spirit whom the sea of boundless thought
Nurtures within its unimagined caves,
In which thou sittest sole, as in my mind,
Giving a voice to its mysterious waves —

O THOU IMMORTAL DEITY. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 2nd edition.)

O thou immortal deity
Whose throne is in the depth of human thought,
I do adjure thy power and thee
By all that man may be, by all that he is not,
By all that he has been and yet must be!

THE FALSE LAUREL AND THE TRUE. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition.)

'What art thou, Presumptuous, who profanest
The wreath to mighty poets only due,
Even whilst like a forgotten moon thou wanest?
Touch not those leaves which for the eternal few
Who wander o'er the Paradise of fame,
In sacred dedication ever grew:
One of the crowd thou art without a name.'
'Ah, friend, 'tis the false laurel that I wear;
Bright though it seem, it is not the same
As that which bound Milton's immortal hair;
Its dew is poison; and the hopes that quicken
Under its chilling shade, though seeming fair,
Are flowers which die almost before they sicken.'

MAY THE LIMNER. (FRAGMENT)

(This and the three following Fragments were edited from manuscript Shelley D1 at the Bodleian Library and published by Mr. C.D. Locock, "Examination", etc., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1903. They are printed here as belonging probably to the year 1821.)

When May is painting with her colours gay
The landscape sketched by April her sweet twin…

BEAUTY'S HALO. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Mr. C.D. Locock, "Examination", etc, 1903.)

Thy beauty hangs around thee like
Splendour around the moon —
Thy voice, as silver bells that strike
Upon

THE DEATH KNELL IS RINGING. (FRAGMENT)

(‘This reads like a study for “Autumn, A Dirge”’ (Locock). Might it not be part of a projected Fit v. of “The Fugitives”? — ED.)

(Published by Mr. C.D. Locock, “Examination”, etc., 1903.)

The death knell is ringing
The raven is singing
The earth worm is creeping
The mourners are weeping
Ding dong, bell — 5

I STOOD UPON A HEAVEN-CLEAVING TURRET. (FRAGMENT)

I stood upon a heaven-cleaving turret
Which overlooked a wide Metropolis —
And in the temple of my heart my Spirit
Lay prostrate, and with parted lips did kiss
The dust of Desolations *(altar)* hearth —
And with a voice too faint to falter
It shook that trembling fane with its weak prayer
‘Twas noon, — the sleeping skies were blue
The city

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1822.

THE ZUCCA.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824, and dated 'January, 1822.' There is a copy amongst the Boscombe manuscripts.)

1.
Summer was dead and Autumn was expiring,
And infant Winter laughed upon the land
All cloudlessly and cold; — when I, desiring
More in this world than any understand,
Wept o'er the beauty, which, like sea retiring,
Had left the earth bare as the wave-worn sand
Of my lorn heart, and o'er the grass and flowers
Pale for the falsehood of the flattering Hours.

2.
Summer was dead, but I yet lived to weep
The instability of all but weeping;
And on the Earth lulled in her winter sleep
I woke, and envied her as she was sleeping.
Too happy Earth! over thy face shall creep
The wakening vernal airs, until thou, leaping
From unremembered dreams, shalt … see
No death divide thy immortality.

3.
I loved — oh, no, I mean not one of ye,
Or any earthly one, though ye are dear
As human heart to human heart may be; —
I loved, I know not what — but this low sphere
And all that it contains, contains not thee,
Thou, whom, seen nowhere, I feel everywhere.
From Heaven and Earth, and all that in them are,
Veiled art thou, like a … star.

4.
By Heaven and Earth, from all whose shapes thou flowest,

Neither to be contained, delayed, nor hidden;
Making divine the loftiest and the lowest,
When for a moment thou art not forbidden
To live within the life which thou bestowest;
And leaving noblest things vacant and chidden,
Cold as a corpse after the spirit's flight
Blank as the sun after the birth of night.

5.
In winds, and trees, and streams, and all things common,
In music and the sweet unconscious tone
Of animals, and voices which are human,
Meant to express some feelings of their own;
In the soft motions and rare smile of woman,
In flowers and leaves, and in the grass fresh-shown,
Or dying in the autumn, I the most
Adore thee present or lament thee lost.

6.
And thus I went lamenting, when I saw
A plant upon the river's margin lie
Like one who loved beyond his nature's law,
And in despair had cast him down to die;
Its leaves, which had outlived the frost, the thaw
Had blighted; like a heart which hatred's eye
Can blast not, but which pity kills; the dew
Lay on its spotted leaves like tears too true.

7.
The Heavens had wept upon it, but the Earth
Had crushed it on her maternal breast

…

8.
I bore it to my chamber, and I planted
It in a vase full of the lightest mould;
The winter beams which out of Heaven slanted

Fell through the window-panes, disrobed of cold,
Upon its leaves and flowers; the stars which panted
In evening for the Day, whose car has rolled
Over the horizon's wave, with looks of light
Smiled on it from the threshold of the night.

9.
The mitigated influences of air
And light revived the plant, and from it grew
Strong leaves and tendrils, and its flowers fair,
Full as a cup with the vine's burning dew,
O'erflowed with golden colours; an atmosphere
Of vital warmth enfolded it anew,
And every impulse sent to every part
The unbeheld pulsations of its heart.

10.
Well might the plant grow beautiful and strong,
Even if the air and sun had smiled not on it;
For one wept o'er it all the winter long
Tears pure as Heaven's rain, which fell upon it
Hour after hour; for sounds of softest song
Mixed with the stringed melodies that won it
To leave the gentle lips on which it slept,
Had loosed the heart of him who sat and wept.

11.
Had loosed his heart, and shook the leaves and flowers
On which he wept, the while the savage storm
Waked by the darkest of December's hours
Was raving round the chamber hushed and warm;
The birds were shivering in their leafless bowers,
The fish were frozen in the pools, the form
Of every summer plant was dead
Whilst this….

…

THE MAGNETIC LADY TO HER PATIENT.

(Published by Medwin, "The Athenaeum", August 11, 1832.
There is a copy amongst the Trelawny manuscripts.)

1.
'Sleep, sleep on! forget thy pain;
My hand is on thy brow,
My spirit on thy brain;
My pity on thy heart, poor friend;
And from my fingers flow
The powers of life, and like a sign,
Seal thee from thine hour of woe;
And brood on thee, but may not blend
With thine.

2.
'Sleep, sleep on! I love thee not;
But when I think that he
Who made and makes my lot
As full of flowers as thine of weeds,
Might have been lost like thee;
And that a hand which was not mine
Might then have charmed his agony
As I another's — my heart bleeds
For thine.

3.
'Sleep, sleep, and with the slumber of
The dead and the unborn
Forget thy life and love;
Forget that thou must wake forever;
Forget the world's dull scorn;
Forget lost health, and the divine
Feelings which died in youth's brief morn;

And forget me, for I can never
Be thine.

4.
‘Like a cloud big with a May shower,
My soul weeps healing rain
On thee, thou withered flower!
It breathes mute music on thy sleep
Its odour calms thy brain!
Its light within thy gloomy breast
Spreads like a second youth again.
By mine thy being is to its deep
Possessed.

5.
‘The spell is done. How feel you now?’
‘Better — Quite well,’ replied
The sleeper.—’What would do
You good when suffering and awake?
What cure your head and side?—’
‘What would cure, that would kill me, Jane:
And as I must on earth abide
Awhile, yet tempt me not to break
My chain.’

LINES: ‘WHEN THE LAMP IS SHATTERED’.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, “Posthumous Poems”, 1824.
There is a copy amongst the Trelawny manuscripts.)

1.
When the lamp is shattered
The light in the dust lies dead —
When the cloud is scattered
The rainbow’s glory is shed.
When the lute is broken,
Sweet tones are remembered not;
When the lips have spoken,
Loved accents are soon forgot.

2.
As music and splendour
Survive not the lamp and the lute,
The heart’s echoes render
No song when the spirit is mute: —
No song but sad dirges,
Like the wind through a ruined cell,
Or the mournful surges
That ring the dead seaman’s knell.

3.
When hearts have once mingled
Love first leaves the well-built nest;
The weak one is singled
To endure what it once possessed.
O Love! who bewailest
The frailty of all things here,
Why choose you the frailest
For your cradle, your home, and your bier?

4.
Its passions will rock thee

As the storms rock the ravens on high;
Bright reason will mock thee,
Like the sun from a wintry sky.
From thy nest every rafter
Will rot, and thine eagle home
Leave thee naked to laughter,
When leaves fall and cold winds come.

TO JANE: THE INVITATION.

(This and the following poem were published together in their original form as one piece under the title, "The Pine Forest of the Cascine near Pisa", by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824; reprinted in the same shape, "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition; republished separately in their present form, "Poetical Works", 1839, 2nd edition. There is a copy amongst the Trelawny manuscripts.)

Best and brightest, come away!
Fairer far than this fair Day,
Which, like thee to those in sorrow,
Comes to bid a sweet good-morrow
To the rough Year just awake
In its cradle on the brake.
The brightest hour of unborn Spring,
Through the winter wandering,
Found, it seems, the halcyon Morn
To hoar February born,
Bending from Heaven, in azure mirth,
It kissed the forehead of the Earth,
And smiled upon the silent sea,
And bade the frozen streams be free,
And waked to music all their fountains,
And breathed upon the frozen mountains,
And like a prophetess of May
Strewed flowers upon the barren way,
Making the wintry world appear
Like one on whom thou smilest, dear.

Away, away, from men and towns,
To the wild wood and the downs —
To the silent wilderness
Where the soul need not repress
Its music lest it should not find
An echo in another's mind,

While the touch of Nature's art
Harmonizes heart to heart.
I leave this notice on my door
For each accustomed visitor: —
'I am gone into the fields
To take what this sweet hour yields; —
Reflection, you may come to-morrow,
Sit by the fireside with Sorrow. —
You with the unpaid bill, Despair, —
You, tiresome verse-reciter, Care, —
I will pay you in the grave, —
Death will listen to your stave.
Expectation too, be off!
To-day is for itself enough;
Hope, in pity mock not Woe
With smiles, nor follow where I go;
Long having lived on thy sweet food,
At length I find one moment's good
After long pain — with all your love,
This you never told me of.'

Radiant Sister of the Day,
Awake! arise! and come away!
To the wild woods and the plains,
And the pools where winter rains
Image all their roof of leaves,
Where the pine its garland weaves
Of sapless green and ivy dun
Round stems that never kiss the sun;
Where the lawns and pastures be,
And the sandhills of the sea; —
Where the melting hoar-frost wets
The daisy-star that never sets,
And wind-flowers, and violets,
Which yet join not scent to hue,
Crown the pale year weak and new;
When the night is left behind

In the deep east, dun and blind,
And the blue noon is over us,
And the multitudinous
Billows murmur at our feet,
Where the earth and ocean meet,
And all things seem only one
In the universal sun.

TO JANE: THE RECOLLECTION.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 2nd edition. See the Editor's prefatory note to the preceding.)

1.
Now the last day of many days,
All beautiful and bright as thou,
The loveliest and the last, is dead,
Rise, Memory, and write its praise!
Up, — to thy wonted work! come, trace
The epitaph of glory fled, —
For now the Earth has changed its face,
A frown is on the Heaven's brow.

2.
We wandered to the Pine Forest
That skirts the Ocean's foam,
The lightest wind was in its nest,
The tempest in its home.
The whispering waves were half asleep,
The clouds were gone to play,
And on the bosom of the deep
The smile of Heaven lay;
It seemed as if the hour were one
Sent from beyond the skies,
Which scattered from above the sun
A light of Paradise.

3.
We paused amid the pines that stood
The giants of the waste,
Tortured by storms to shapes as rude
As serpents interlaced;
And, soothed by every azure breath,
That under Heaven is blown,

To harmonies and hues beneath,
As tender as its own,
Now all the tree-tops lay asleep,
Like green waves on the sea,
As still as in the silent deep
The ocean woods may be.

4.
How calm it was! — the silence there
By such a chain was bound
That even the busy woodpecker
Made stiller by her sound
The inviolable quietness;
The breath of peace we drew
With its soft motion made not less
The calm that round us grew.
There seemed from the remotest seat
Of the white mountain waste,
To the soft flower beneath our feet,
A magic circle traced, —
A spirit interfused around
A thrilling, silent life, —
To momentary peace it bound
Our mortal nature's strife;
And still I felt the centre of
The magic circle there
Was one fair form that filled with love
The lifeless atmosphere.

5.
We paused beside the pools that lie
Under the forest bough, —
Each seemed as 'twere a little sky
Gulfed in a world below;
A firmament of purple light
Which in the dark earth lay,
More boundless than the depth of night,

And purer than the day —
In which the lovely forests grew,
As in the upper air,
More perfect both in shape and hue
Than any spreading there.
There lay the glade and neighbouring lawn,
And through the dark green wood
The white sun twinkling like the dawn
Out of a speckled cloud.
Sweet views which in our world above
Can never well be seen,
Were imaged by the water's love
Of that fair forest green.
And all was interfused beneath
With an Elysian glow,
An atmosphere without a breath,
A softer day below.
Like one beloved the scene had lent
To the dark water's breast,
Its every leaf and lineament
With more than truth expressed;
Until an envious wind crept by,
Like an unwelcome thought,
Which from the mind's too faithful eye
Blots one dear image out.
Though thou art ever fair and kind,
The forests ever green,
Less oft is peace in Shelley's mind,
Than calm in waters, seen.

THE PINE FOREST OF THE CASCINE NEAR PISA.

(This, the first draft of "To Jane: The Invitation, The Recollection", was published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824, and reprinted, "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition. See Editor's Prefatory Note to "The Invitation", above.)

Dearest, best and brightest,
Come away,
To the woods and to the fields!
Dearer than this fairest day
Which, like thee to those in sorrow,
Comes to bid a sweet good-morrow
To the rough Year just awake
In its cradle in the brake.
The eldest of the Hours of Spring,
Into the Winter wandering,
Looks upon the leafless wood,
And the banks all bare and rude;
Found, it seems, this halcyon Morn
In February's bosom born,
Bending from Heaven, in azure mirth,
Kissed the cold forehead of the Earth,
And smiled upon the silent sea,
And bade the frozen streams be free;
And waked to music all the fountains,
And breathed upon the rigid mountains,
And made the wintry world appear
Like one on whom thou smilest, Dear.

Radiant Sister of the Day,
Awake! arise! and come away!
To the wild woods and the plains,
To the pools where winter rains
Image all the roof of leaves,
Where the pine its garland weaves

Sapless, gray, and ivy dun
Round stems that never kiss the sun —
To the sandhills of the sea,
Where the earliest violets be.

Now the last day of many days,
All beautiful and bright as thou,
The loveliest and the last, is dead,
Rise, Memory, and write its praise!
And do thy wonted work and trace
The epitaph of glory fled;
For now the Earth has changed its face,
A frown is on the Heaven's brow.

We wandered to the Pine Forest
That skirts the Ocean's foam,
The lightest wind was in its nest,
The tempest in its home.

The whispering waves were half asleep,
The clouds were gone to play,
And on the woods, and on the deep
The smile of Heaven lay.

It seemed as if the day were one
Sent from beyond the skies,
Which shed to earth above the sun
A light of Paradise.

We paused amid the pines that stood,
The giants of the waste,
Tortured by storms to shapes as rude
With stems like serpents interlaced.

How calm it was — the silence there
By such a chain was bound,
That even the busy woodpecker
Made stiller by her sound

The inviolable quietness;
The breath of peace we drew
With its soft motion made not less
The calm that round us grew.

It seemed that from the remotest seat
Of the white mountain's waste
To the bright flower beneath our feet,
A magic circle traced; —

A spirit interfused around,
A thinking, silent life;
To momentary peace it bound
Our mortal nature's strife; —

And still, it seemed, the centre of
The magic circle there,
Was one whose being filled with love
The breathless atmosphere.

Were not the crocuses that grew
Under that ilex-tree
As beautiful in scent and hue
As ever fed the bee?

We stood beneath the pools that lie
Under the forest bough,
And each seemed like a sky
Gulfed in a world below;

A purple firmament of light
Which in the dark earth lay,
More boundless than the depth of night,
And clearer than the day —

In which the massy forests grew
As in the upper air,

More perfect both in shape and hue
Than any waving there.

Like one beloved the scene had lent
To the dark water's breast
Its every leaf and lineament
With that clear truth expressed;

There lay far glades and neighbouring lawn,
And through the dark green crowd
The white sun twinkling like the dawn
Under a speckled cloud.

Sweet views, which in our world above
Can never well be seen,
Were imaged by the water's love
Of that fair forest green.

And all was interfused beneath
With an Elysian air,
An atmosphere without a breath,
A silence sleeping there.

Until a wandering wind crept by,
Like an unwelcome thought,
Which from my mind's too faithful eye
Blots thy bright image out.

For thou art good and dear and kind,
The forest ever green,
But less of peace in S—'s mind,
Than calm in waters, seen. 116.

WITH A GUITAR, TO JANE.

(Published by Medwin, "The Athenaeum", October 20, 1832; "Frazer's Magazine", January 1833. There is a copy amongst the Trelawny manuscripts.)

Ariel to Miranda: — Take
This slave of Music, for the sake
Of him who is the slave of thee,
And teach it all the harmony
In which thou canst, and only thou,
Make the delighted spirit glow,
Till joy denies itself again,
And, too intense, is turned to pain;
For by permission and command
Of thine own Prince Ferdinand,
Poor Ariel sends this silent token
Of more than ever can be spoken;
Your guardian spirit, Ariel, who,
From life to life, must still pursue
Your happiness; — for thus alone
Can Ariel ever find his own.
From Prospero's enchanted cell,
As the mighty verses tell,
To the throne of Naples, he
Lit you o'er the trackless sea,
Flitting on, your prow before,
Like a living meteor.
When you die, the silent Moon,
In her interlunar swoon,
Is not sadder in her cell
Than deserted Ariel.
When you live again on earth,
Like an unseen star of birth,
Ariel guides you o'er the sea
Of life from your nativity.

Many changes have been run
Since Ferdinand and you begun
Your course of love, and Ariel still
Has tracked your steps, and served your will;
Now, in humbler, happier lot,
This is all remembered not;
And now, alas! the poor sprite is
Imprisoned, for some fault of his,
In a body like a grave; —
From you he only dares to crave,
For his service and his sorrow,
A smile today, a song tomorrow.

The artist who this idol wrought,
To echo all harmonious thought,
Felled a tree, while on the steep
The woods were in their winter sleep,
Rocked in that repose divine
On the wind-swept Apennine;
And dreaming, some of Autumn past,
And some of Spring approaching fast,
And some of April buds and showers,
And some of songs in July bowers,
And all of love; and so this tree, —
O that such our death may be! —
Died in sleep, and felt no pain,
To live in happier form again:
From which, beneath Heaven's fairest star,
The artist wrought this loved Guitar,
And taught it justly to reply,
To all who question skilfully,
In language gentle as thine own;
Whispering in enamoured tone
Sweet oracles of woods and dells,
And summer winds in sylvan cells;
For it had learned all harmonies
Of the plains and of the skies,

Of the forests and the mountains,
And the many-voiced fountains;
The clearest echoes of the hills,
The softest notes of falling rills,
The melodies of birds and bees,
The murmuring of summer seas,
And pattering rain, and breathing dew,
And airs of evening; and it knew
That seldom-heard mysterious sound,
Which, driven on its diurnal round,
As it floats through boundless day,
Our world enkindles on its way. —
All this it knows, but will not tell
To those who cannot question well
The Spirit that inhabits it;
It talks according to the wit
Of its companions; and no more
Is heard than has been felt before,
By those who tempt it to betray
These secrets of an elder day:
But, sweetly as its answers will
Flatter hands of perfect skill,
It keeps its highest, holiest tone
For our beloved Jane alone.

TO JANE: ‘THE KEEN STARS WERE TWINKLING’.

(Published in part (lines 7-24) by Medwin (under the title, “An Ariette for Music. To a Lady singing to her Accompaniment on the Guitar”), “The Athenaeum”, November 17, 1832; reprinted by Mrs. Shelley, “Poetical Works”, 1839, 1st edition. Republished in full (under the title, To — .), “Poetical Works”, 1839, 2nd edition. The Trelawny manuscript is headed “To Jane”. Mr. C.W. Frederickson of Brooklyn possesses a transcript in an unknown hand.)

1.
The keen stars were twinkling,
And the fair moon was rising among them,
Dear Jane!
The guitar was tinkling,
But the notes were not sweet till you sung them
Again.

2.
As the moon’s soft splendour
O’er the faint cold starlight of Heaven
Is thrown,
So your voice most tender
To the strings without soul had then given
Its own.

3.
The stars will awaken,
Though the moon sleep a full hour later,
To-night;
No leaf will be shaken
Whilst the dews of your melody scatter
Delight.

4.
Though the sound overpowers,

Sing again, with your dear voice revealing
A tone
Of some world far from ours,
Where music and moonlight and feeling
Are one.

A DIRGE.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.)

Rough wind, that moanest loud
Grief too sad for song;
Wild wind, when sullen cloud
Knells all the night long;
Sad storm whose tears are vain,
Bare woods, whose branches strain,
Deep caves and dreary main, —
Wail, for the world's wrong!

LINES WRITTEN IN THE BAY OF LERICI.

(Published from the Boscombe manuscripts by Dr. Garnett, "Macmillan's Magazine", June, 1862; reprinted, "Relics of Shelley", 1862.)

She left me at the silent time
When the moon had ceased to climb
The azure path of Heaven's steep,
And like an albatross asleep,
Balanced on her wings of light,
Hovered in the purple night,
Ere she sought her ocean nest
In the chambers of the West.
She left me, and I stayed alone
Thinking over every tone
Which, though silent to the ear,
The enchanted heart could hear,
Like notes which die when born, but still
Haunt the echoes of the hill;
And feeling ever — oh, too much! —
The soft vibration of her touch,
As if her gentle hand, even now,
Lightly trembled on my brow;
And thus, although she absent were,
Memory gave me all of her
That even Fancy dares to claim: —
Her presence had made weak and tame
All passions, and I lived alone
In the time which is our own;
The past and future were forgot,
As they had been, and would be, not.
But soon, the guardian angel gone,
The daemon reassumed his throne
In my faint heart. I dare not speak
My thoughts, but thus disturbed and weak
I sat and saw the vessels glide

Over the ocean bright and wide,
Like spirit-winged chariots sent
O’er some serenest element
For ministrations strange and far;
As if to some Elysian star
Sailed for drink to medicine
Such sweet and bitter pain as mine.
And the wind that winged their flight
From the land came fresh and light,
And the scent of winged flowers,
And the coolness of the hours
Of dew, and sweet warmth left by day,
Were scattered o’er the twinkling bay.
And the fisher with his lamp
And spear about the low rocks damp
Crept, and struck the fish which came
To worship the delusive flame.
Too happy they, whose pleasure sought
Extinguishes all sense and thought
Of the regret that pleasure leaves,
Destroying life alone, not peace!

LINES: ‘WE MEET NOT AS WE PARTED’.

(Published by Dr. Garnett, “Relics of Shelley”, 1862.)

1.
We meet not as we parted,
We feel more than all may see;
My bosom is heavy-hearted,
And thine full of doubt for me: —
One moment has bound the free.

2.
That moment is gone for ever,
Like lightning that flashed and died —
Like a snowflake upon the river —
Like a sunbeam upon the tide,
Which the dark shadows hide.

3.
That moment from time was singled
As the first of a life of pain;
The cup of its joy was mingled
— Delusion too sweet though vain!
Too sweet to be mine again.

4.
Sweet lips, could my heart have hidden
That its life was crushed by you,
Ye would not have then forbidden
The death which a heart so true
Sought in your briny dew.

5.
…
…
…

Methinks too little cost
For a moment so found, so lost!

THE ISLE.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.)

There was a little lawny islet
By anemone and violet,
Like mosaic, paven:
And its roof was flowers and leaves
Which the summer's breath enweaves,
Where nor sun nor showers nor breeze
Pierce the pines and tallest trees,
Each a gem engraven; —
Girt by many an azure wave
With which the clouds and mountains pave
A lake's blue chasm.

TO THE MOON. (FRAGMENT)

(Published by Dr. Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862.)

Bright wanderer, fair coquette of Heaven,
To whom alone it has been given
To change and be adored for ever,
Envy not this dim world, for never
But once within its shadow grew
One fair as —

EPITAPH.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.)

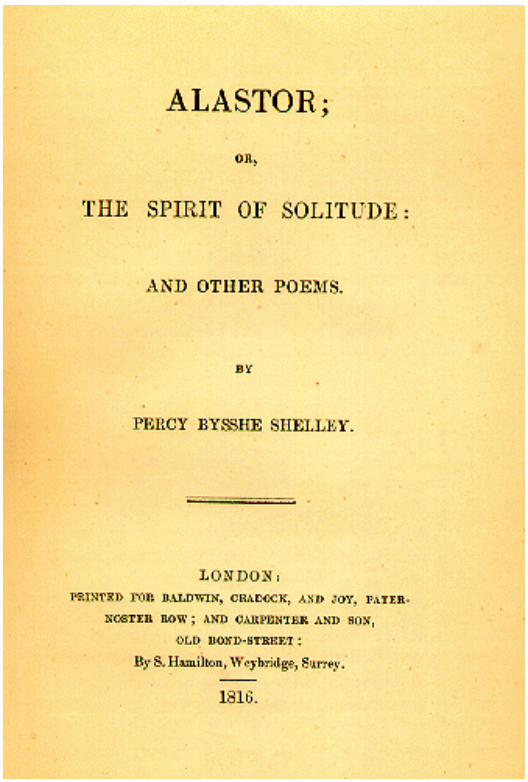
These are two friends whose lives were undivided;
So let their memory be, now they have glided
Under the grave; let not their bones be parted,
For their two hearts in life were single-hearted.

ALASTOR

Written in 1815 whilst Shelley was staying at Bishopsgate, this poem was without a title when the poet passed it along to his friend and fellow poet Thomas Love Peacock, who suggested the name Alastor, an ‘evil genius’ from Roman mythology. The name does not refer to the hero or narrator, but instead to the spirit that divinely animates the poem.

Alastor recounts the life of a poet that zealously pursues the most obscure part of nature in search of “strange truths in undiscovered lands”, journeying to the Caucasus Mountains and other obscure locations. The poet rejects an Arab maiden in his search for an idealised embodiment of a woman. As the poet wanders one night, he dreams of a veiled maid, who tells him of the supernatural world that lies beyond nature. This dream vision serves as a mediator between the natural and supernatural domains by portraying both the spirit and element of human love.

Reviews were initially negative when the poem was published in 1816. John Gibson Lockhart of the *Edinburgh Magazine* wrote the first major positive review in the November, 1819 issue, declaring Shelley as “a man of genius... Mr. Shelley is a poet, almost in the very highest sense of that mysterious word.” Leigh Hunt also praised *Alastor* in the December, 1816 issue of *The Examiner*. However, the poem was attacked by contemporary critics for its obscurity. In a review in *The Monthly Review* for April, 1816, a critic complained: “We must candidly own that these poems are beyond our comprehension; and we did not obtain a clue to their sublime obscurity, till an address to Mr. Wordsworth explained in what school the author had formed his taste.”



ALASTOR;

OR,

THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE:

AND OTHER POEMS.

BY

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR BALDWIN, CRADOCK, AND JOY, PATER-
NOSTER ROW; AND CARPENTER AND SON,
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By S. Hamilton, Weybridge, Surrey.

1816.

The original title page

Thomas Love Peacock (1785-1866) was an English novelist, poet, and official of the East India Company. He was also a close friend of Shelley and they influenced each other's work.

Introductory Note

Nondum amabam, et amare amabam,
quærebam quid amarem, amans amare.
Confess. St. August.

Alastor was published nearly three years after the issue of *Queen Mab,* in 1816, in a thin volume with a few other poems. It is strongly opposed to the earlier poem, and begins that series of ideal portraits, — in the main, incarnations of Shelley's own aspiring and melancholy spirit, — which contain his personal charm and shadow forth his own history of isolation in the world; they are interpretations of the hero rather than pronunciamentos of the cause, and are free from the entanglements of political and social reform and religious strife. The poetical antecedents of *Alastor* are Wordsworth and Coleridge. The deepening of the poet's self-consciousness is evident in every line, and the growth of his genius in grace and strength, in the element of expression, is so marked as to give a different cadence to his verse. He composed the poem in the autumn of 1815, when he was twenty-three years old and after the earlier misfortunes of his life had befallen him. Mrs. Shelley's account of the poem is the best, and nothing has since been added to it:

'*Alastor* is written in a very different tone from *Queen Mab.* In the latter, Shelley poured out all the cherished speculations of his youth — all the irrepressible emotions of sympathy, censure, and hope, to which the present suffering, and what he considers the proper destiny of his fellow-creatures, gave birth. *Alastor,* on the contrary, contains an individual interest only. A very few years, with their attendant events, had checked the ardor of Shelley's hopes, though he still thought them well-grounded, and that to advance their fulfilment was the noblest task man could achieve.

'This is neither the time nor place to speak of the misfortunes that checkered his life. It will be sufficient to say, that in all he did, he at the time of doing it believed himself justified to his own conscience; while the various ills of poverty and loss of friends brought home to him the sad realities of life. Physical suffering had also considerable influence in causing him to turn his eyes inward; inclining him rather to brood over the thoughts and emotions of his own soul, than to glance abroad, and to make,

as in *Queen Mab,* the whole universe the object and subject of his song. In the spring of 1815, an eminent physician pronounced that he was dying rapidly of a consumption; abscesses were formed on his lungs, and he suffered acute spasms. Suddenly a complete change took place; and though through life he was a martyr to pain and debility, every symptom of pulmonary disease vanished. His nerves, which nature had formed sensitive to an unexampled degree, were rendered still more susceptible by the state of his health.

'As soon as the peace of 1814 had opened the Continent, he went abroad. He visited some of the more magnificent scenes of Switzerland, and returned to England from Lucerne by the Reuss and the Rhine. This river-navigation enchanted him. In his favorite poem of *Thalaba* his imagination had been excited by a description of such a voyage. In the summer of 1815, after a tour along the southern coast of Devonshire and a visit to Clifton, he rented a house on Bishopgate Heath, on the borders of Windsor Forest, where he enjoyed several months of comparative health and tranquil happiness. The later summer months were warm and dry. Accompanied by a few friends, he visited the source of the Thames, making a voyage in a wherry from Windsor to Crichlade. His beautiful stanzas in the churchyard of Lechlade were written on that occasion. *Alastor* was composed on his return. He spent his days under the oak-shades of Windsor Great Park; and the magnificent woodland was a fitting study to inspire the various descriptions of forest scenery we find in the poem.

'None of Shelley's poems is more characteristic than this. The solemn spirit that reigns throughout, the worship of the majesty of nature, the broodings of a poet's heart in solitude — the mingling of the exulting joy which the various aspect of the visible universe inspires, with the sad and struggling pangs which human passion imparts, give a touching interest to the whole. The death which he had often contemplated during the last months as certain and near, he here represented in such colors as had, in his lonely musings, soothed his soul to peace. The versification sustains the solemn spirit which breathes throughout: it is peculiarly melodious. The poem ought rather to be considered didactic than narrative: it was the outpouring of his own emotions, embodied in the purest form he could conceive, painted in the ideal hues which his brilliant imagination inspired, and softened by the recent anticipation of death.'

Peacock explains the title: ‘At this time Shelley wrote his *Alastor*. He was at a loss for a title, and I proposed that which he adopted: *Alastor; or, the Spirit of Solitude*. The Greek word, ..., is an evil genius, ..., though the sense of the two words is somewhat different, as in the ... of Æschylus. The poem treated the spirit of solitude as a spirit of evil. I mention the true meaning of the word because many have supposed *Alastor* to be the name of the hero of the poem.’

In his *Preface* Shelley thus describes the main character, and draws its moral:

‘The poem entitled *Alastor* may be considered as allegorical of one of the most interesting situations of the human mind. It represents a youth of uncorrupted feelings and adventurous genius led forth by an imagination inflamed and purified through familiarity with all that is excellent and majestic to the contemplation of the universe. He drinks deep of the fountains of knowledge and is still insatiate. The magnificence and beauty of the external world sinks profoundly into the frame of his conceptions and affords to their modifications a variety not to be exhausted. So long as it is possible for his desires to point towards objects thus infinite and unmeasured, he is joyous and tranquil and self-possessed. But the period arrives when these objects cease to suffice. His mind is at length suddenly awakened and thirsts for intercourse with an intelligence similar to itself. He images to himself the Being whom he loves. Conversant with speculations of the sublimest and most perfect natures, the vision in which he embodies his own imaginations unites all of wonderful or wise or beautiful, which the poet, the philosopher or the lover could depicture. The intellectual faculties, the imagination, the functions of sense have their respective requisitions on the sympathy of corresponding powers in other human beings. The Poet is represented as uniting these requisitions and attaching them to a single image. He seeks in vain for a prototype of his conception. Blasted by his disappointment, he descends to an untimely grave.

‘The picture is not barren of instruction to actual men. The Poet’s self-centred seclusion was avenged by the furies of an irresistible passion pursuing him to speedy ruin. But that Power, which strikes the luminaries of the world with sudden darkness and extinction by awakening them to too exquisite a perception of its influences, dooms to a slow and poisonous decay those meaner spirits that dare to abjure its dominion. Their destiny is

more abject and inglorious as their delinquency is more contemptible and pernicious. They who, deluded by no generous error, instigated by no sacred thirst of doubtful knowledge, duped by no illustrious superstition, loving nothing on this earth, and cherishing no hopes beyond, yet keep aloof from sympathies with their kind, rejoicing neither in human joy nor mourning with human grief; these, and such as they, have their apportioned curse. They languish, because none feel with them their common nature. They are morally dead. They are neither friends, nor lovers, nor fathers, nor citizens of the world, nor benefactors of their country. Among those who attempt to exist without human sympathy, the pure and tender-hearted perish through the intensity and passion of their search after its communities, when the vacancy of their spirit suddenly makes itself felt. All else, selfish, blind and torpid, are those unforeseeing multitudes who constitute, together with their own, the lasting misery and loneliness of the world. Those who love not their fellow-beings live unfruitful lives and prepare for their old age a miserable grave.

‘The good die first,
And those whose hearts are dry as summer dust
Burn to the socket!

‘*December* 14, 1815.’

Alastor: Or, the Spirit of Solitude

EARTH, Ocean, Air, belovèd brotherhood!
If our great Mother has imbued my soul
With aught of natural piety to feel
Your love, and recompense the boon with mine;
If dewy morn, and odorous noon, and even,
With sunset and its gorgeous ministers,
And solemn midnight's tingling silentness;
If Autumn's hollow sighs in the sere wood,
And Winter robing with pure snow and crowns
Of starry ice the gray grass and bare boughs;
If Spring's voluptuous pantings when she breathes
Her first sweet kisses, — have been dear to me;
If no bright bird, insect, or gentle beast
I consciously have injured, but still loved
And cherished these my kindred; then forgive
This boast, belovèd brethren, and withdraw
No portion of your wonted favor now!

Mother of this unfathomable world!
Favor my solemn song, for I have loved
Thee ever, and thee only; I have watched
Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps,
And my heart ever gazes on the depth
Of thy deep mysteries. I have made my bed
In charnels and on coffins, where black death
Keeps record of the trophies won from thee,
Hoping to still these obstinate questionings
Of thee and thine, by forcing some lone ghost,
Thy messenger, to render up the tale
Of what we are. In lone and silent hours,
When night makes a weird sound of its own stillness,
Like an inspired and desperate alchemist
Staking his very life on some dark hope,
Have I mixed awful talk and asking looks

With my most innocent love, until strange tears,
Uniting with those breathless kisses, made
Such magic as compels the charmèd night
To render up thy charge; and, though ne'er yet
Thou hast unveiled thy inmost sanctuary,
Enough from incommunicable dream,
And twilight phantasms, and deep noonday thought,
Has shone within me, that serenely now
And moveless, as a long-forgotten lyre
Suspended in the solitary dome
Of some mysterious and deserted fane,
I wait thy breath, Great Parent, that my strain
May modulate with murmurs of the air,
And motions of the forests and the sea,
And voice of living beings, and woven hymns
Of night and day, and the deep heart of man.

There was a Poet whose untimely tomb
No human hands with pious reverence reared,
But the charmed eddies of autumnal winds
Built o'er his mouldering bones a pyramid
Of mouldering leaves in the waste wilderness:
A lovely youth, — no mourning maiden decked
With weeping flowers, or votive cypress wreath,
The lone couch of his everlasting sleep:
Gentle, and brave, and generous, — no lorn bard
Breathed o'er his dark fate one melodious sigh:
He lived, he died, he sung in solitude.
Strangers have wept to hear his passionate notes,
And virgins, as unknown he passed, have pined
And wasted for fond love of his wild eyes.
The fire of those soft orbs has ceased to burn,
And Silence, too enamoured of that voice,
Locks its mute music in her rugged cell.

By solemn vision and bright silver dream
His infancy was nurtured. Every sight

And sound from the vast earth and ambient air
Sent to his heart its choicest impulses.
The fountains of divine philosophy
Fled not his thirsting lips, and all of great,
Or good, or lovely, which the sacred past
In truth or fable consecrates, he felt
And knew. When early youth had passed, he left
His cold fireside and alienated home
To seek strange truths in undiscovered lands.
Many a wide waste and tangled wilderness
Has lured his fearless steps; and he has bought
With his sweet voice and eyes, from savage men,
His rest and food. Nature's most secret steps
He like her shadow has pursued, where'er
The red volcano overcanopies
Its fields of snow and pinnacles of ice
With burning smoke, or where bitumen lakes
On black bare pointed islets ever beat
With sluggish surge, or where the secret caves,
Rugged and dark, winding among the springs
Of fire and poison, inaccessible
To avarice or pride, their starry domes
Of diamond and of gold expand above
Numberless and immeasurable halls,
Frequent with crystal column, and clear shrines
Of pearl, and thrones radiant with chrysolite.
Nor had that scene of ampler majesty
Than gems or gold, the varying roof of heaven
And the green earth, lost in his heart its claims
To love and wonder; he would linger long
In lonesome vales, making the wild his home,
Until the doves and squirrels would partake
From his innocuous band his bloodless food,
Lured by the gentle meaning of his looks,
And the wild antelope, that starts whene'er
The dry leaf rustles in the brake, suspend

Her timid steps, to gaze upon a form
More graceful than her own.

His wandering step,
Obedient to high thoughts, has visited
The awful ruins of the days of old:
Athens, and Tyre, and Balbec, and the waste
Where stood Jerusalem, the fallen towers
Of Babylon, the eternal pyramids,
Memphis and Thebes, and whatsoe'er of strange,
Sculptured on alabaster obelisk
Or jasper tomb or mutilated sphinx,
Dark Æthiopia in her desert hills
Conceals. Among the ruined temples there,
Stupendous columns, and wild images
Of more than man, where marble daemons watch
The Zodiac's brazen mystery, and dead men
Hang their mute thoughts on the mute walls around,
He lingered, poring on memorials
Of the world's youth: through the long burning day
Gazed on those speechless shapes; nor, when the moon
Filled the mysterious halls with floating shades
Suspended he that task, but ever gazed
And gazed, till meaning on his vacant mind
Flashed like strong inspiration, and he saw
The thrilling secrets of the birth of time.

Meanwhile an Arab maiden brought his food,
Her daily portion, from her father's tent,
And spread her matting for his couch, and stole
From duties and repose to tend his steps,
Enamoured, yet not daring for deep awe
To speak her love, and watched his nightly sleep,
Sleepless herself, to gaze upon his lips
Parted in slumber, whence the regular breath
Of innocent dreams arose; then, when red morn

Made paler the pale moon, to her cold home
Wildered, and wan, and panting, she returned.

The Poet, wandering on, through Arabie,
And Persia, and the wild Carmanian waste,
And o'er the aërial mountains which pour down
Indus and Oxus from their icy caves,
In joy and exultation held his way;
Till in the vale of Cashmire, far within
Its loneliest dell, where odorous plants entwine
Beneath the hollow rocks a natural bower,
Beside a sparkling rivulet he stretched
His languid limbs. A vision on his sleep
There came, a dream of hopes that never yet
Had flushed his cheek. He dreamed a veilèd maid
Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.
Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
Heard in the calm of thought; its music long,
Like woven sounds of streams and breezes, held
His inmost sense suspended in its web
Of many-colored woof and shifting hues.
Knowledge and truth and virtue were her theme,
And lofty hopes of divine liberty,
Thoughts the most dear to him, and poesy,
Herself a poet. Soon the solemn mood
Of her pure mind kindled through all her frame
A permeating fire; wild numbers then
She raised, with voice stifled in tremulous sobs
Subdued by its own pathos; her fair hands
Were bare alone, sweeping from some strange harp
Strange symphony, and in their branching veins
The eloquent blood told an ineffable tale.
The beating of her heart was heard to fill
The pauses of her music, and her breath
Tumultuously accorded with those fits
Of intermitted song. Sudden she rose,
As if her heart impatiently endured

Its bursting burden; at the sound he turned,
And saw by the warm light of their own life
Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil
Of woven wind, her outspread arms now bare,
Her dark locks floating in the breath of night,
Her beamy bending eyes, her parted lips
Outstretched, and pale, and quivering eagerly.
His strong heart sunk and sickened with excess
Of love. He reared his shuddering limbs, and quelled
His gasping breath, and spread his arms to meet
Her panting bosom: — she drew back awhile,
Then, yielding to the irresistible joy,
With frantic gesture and short breathless cry
Folded his frame in her dissolving arms.
Now blackness veiled his dizzy eyes, and night
Involved and swallowed up the vision; sleep,
Like a dark flood suspended in its course,
Rolled back its impulse on his vacant brain.

Roused by the shock, he started from his trance —
The cold white light of morning, the blue moon
Low in the west, the clear and garish hills,
The distinct valley and the vacant woods,
Spread round him where he stood. Whither have fled
The hues of heaven that canopied his bower
Of yesternight? The sounds that soothed his sleep,
The mystery and the majesty of Earth,
The joy, the exultation? His wan eyes
Gaze on the empty scene as vacantly
As ocean's moon looks on the moon in heaven.
The spirit of sweet human love has sent
A vision to the sleep of him who spurned
Her choicest gifts. He eagerly pursues
Beyond the realms of dream that fleeting shade;
He overleaps the bounds. Alas! alas!
Were limbs and breath and being intertwined
Thus treacherously? Lost, lost, forever lost

In the wide pathless desert of dim sleep,
That beautiful shape! Does the dark gate of death
Conduct to thy mysterious paradise,
O Sleep? Does the bright arch of rainbow clouds
And pendent mountains seen in the calm lake
Lead only to a black and watery depth,
While death's blue vault with loathliest vapors hung,
Where every shade which the foul grave exhales
Hides its dead eye from the detested day,
Conducts, O Sleep, to thy delightful realms?
This doubt with sudden tide flowed on his heart;
The insatiate hope which it awakened stung
His brain even like despair.

While daylight held
The sky, the Poet kept mute conference
With his still soul. At night the passion came,
Like the fierce fiend of a distempered dream,
And shook him from his rest, and led him forth
Into the darkness. As an eagle, grasped
In folds of the green serpent, feels her breast
Burn with the poison, and precipitates
Through night and day, tempest, and calm, and cloud,
Frantic with dizzying anguish, her blind flight
O'er the wide aëry wilderness: thus driven
By the bright shadow of that lovely dream,
Beneath the cold glare of the desolate night,
Through tangled swamps and deep precipitous dells,
Startling with careless step the moon-light snake,
He fled. Red morning dawned upon his flight,
Shedding the mockery of its vital hues
Upon his cheek of death. He wandered on
Till vast Aornos seen from Petra's steep
Hung o'er the low horizon like a cloud;
Through Balk, and where the desolated tombs
Of Parthian kings scatter to every wind
Their wasting dust, wildly he wandered on,

Day after day, a weary waste of hours,
Bearing within his life the brooding care
That ever fed on its decaying flame.
And now his limbs were lean; his scattered hair,
Sered by the autumn of strange suffering,
Sung dirges in the wind; his listless hand
Hung like dead bone within its withered skin;
Life, and the lustre that consumed it, shone,
As in a furnace burning secretly,
From his dark eyes alone. The cottagers,
Who ministered with human charity
His human wants, beheld with wondering awe
Their fleeting visitant. The mountaineer,
Encountering on some dizzy precipice
That spectral form, deemed that the Spirit of Wind,
With lightning eyes, and eager breath, and feet
Disturbing not the drifted snow, had paused
In its career; the infant would conceal
His troubled visage in his mother's robe
In terror at the glare of those wild eyes,
To remember their strange light in many a dream
Of after times; but youthful maidens, taught
By nature, would interpret half the woe
That wasted him, would call him with false names
Brother and friend, would press his pallid hand
At parting, and watch, dim through tears, the path
Of his departure from their father's door.

At length upon the lone Chorasmian shore
He paused, a wide and melancholy waste
Of putrid marshes. A strong impulse urged
His steps to the sea-shore. A swan was there,
Beside a sluggish stream among the reeds.
It rose as he approached, and, with strong wings
Scaling the upward sky, bent its bright course
High over the immeasurable main.
His eyes pursued its flight:—'Thou hast a home,

Beautiful bird! thou voyagest to thine home,
Where thy sweet mate will twine her downy neck
With thine, and welcome thy return with eyes
Bright in the lustre of their own fond joy.
And what am I that I should linger here,
With voice far sweeter than thy dying notes,
Spirit more vast than thine, frame more attuned
To beauty, wasting these surpassing powers
In the deaf air, to the blind earth, and heaven
That echoes not my thoughts?' A gloomy smile
Of desperate hope wrinkled his quivering lips.
For sleep, he knew, kept most relentlessly
Its precious charge, and silent death exposed,
Faithless perhaps as sleep, a shadowy lure,
With doubtful smile mocking its own strange charms.

Startled by his own thoughts, he looked around.
There was no fair fiend near him, not a sight
Or sound of awe but in his own deep mind.
A little shallop floating near the shore
Caught the impatient wandering of his gaze.
It had been long abandoned, for its sides
Gaped wide with many a rift, and its frail joints
Swayed with the undulations of the tide.
A restless impulse urged him to embark
And meet lone Death on the drear ocean's waste;
For well he knew that mighty Shadow loves
The slimy caverns of the populous deep.

The day was fair and sunny; sea and sky
Drank its inspiring radiance, and the wind
Swept strongly from the shore, blackening the waves.
Following his eager soul, the wanderer
Leaped in the boat; he spread his cloak aloft
On the bare mast, and took his lonely seat,
And felt the boat speed o'er the tranquil sea
Like a torn cloud before the hurricane.

As one that in a silver vision floats
Obedient to the sweep of odorous winds
Upon resplendent clouds, so rapidly
Along the dark and ruffled waters fled
The straining boat. A whirlwind swept it on,
With fierce gusts and precipitating force,
Through the white ridges of the chafèd sea.
The waves arose. Higher and higher still
Their fierce necks writhed beneath the tempest's scourge
Like serpents struggling in a vulture's grasp.
Calm and rejoicing in the fearful war
Of wave ruining on wave, and blast on blast
Descending, and black flood on whirlpool driven
With dark obliterating course, he sate:
As if their genii were the ministers
Appointed to conduct him to the light
Of those belovèd eyes, the Poet sate,
Holding the steady helm. Evening came on;
The beams of sunset hung their rainbow hues
High 'mid the shifting domes of sheeted spray
That canopied his path o'er the waste deep;
Twilight, ascending slowly from the east,
Entwined in duskier wreaths her braided locks
O'er the fair front and radiant eyes of Day;
Night followed, clad with stars. On every side
More horribly the multitudinous streams
Of ocean's mountainous waste to mutual war
Rushed in dark tumult thundering, as to mock
The calm and spangled sky. The little boat
Still fled before the storm; still fled, like foam
Down the steep cataract of a wintry river;
Now pausing on the edge of the riven wave;
Now leaving far behind the bursting mass
That fell, convulsing ocean; safely fled —
As if that frail and wasted human form
Had been an elemental god.

At midnight
The moon arose; and lo! the ethereal cliffs
Of Caucasus, whose icy summits shone
Among the stars like sunlight, and around
Whose caverned base the whirlpools and the waves
Bursting and eddying irresistibly
Rage and resound forever. — Who shall save? —
The boat fled on, — the boiling torrent drove, —
The crags closed round with black and jagged arms,
The shattered mountain overhung the sea,
And faster still, beyond all human speed,
Suspended on the sweep of the smooth wave,
The little boat was driven. A cavern there
Yawned, and amid its slant and winding depths
Ingulfed the rushing sea. The boat fled on
With unrelaxing speed.—'Vision and Love!'
The Poet cried aloud, 'I have beheld
The path of thy departure. Sleep and death
Shall not divide us long.'

The boat pursued
The windings of the cavern. Daylight shone
At length upon that gloomy river's flow;
Now, where the fiercest war among the waves
Is calm, on the unfathomable stream
The boat moved slowly. Where the mountain, riven,
Exposed those black depths to the azure sky,
Ere yet the flood's enormous volume fell
Even to the base of Caucasus, with sound
That shook the everlasting rocks, the mass
Filled with one whirlpool all that ample chasm;
Stair above stair the eddying waters rose,
Circling immeasurably fast, and laved
With alternating dash the gnarlèd roots
Of mighty trees, that stretched their giant arms
In darkness over it. I' the midst was left,
Reflecting yet distorting every cloud,

A pool of treacherous and tremendous calm.
Seized by the sway of the ascending stream,
With dizzy swiftness, round and round and round,
Ridge after ridge the straining boat arose,
Till on the verge of the extremest curve,
Where through an opening of the rocky bank
The waters overflow, and a smooth spot
Of glassy quiet ‘mid those battling tides
Is left, the boat paused shuddering. — Shall it sink
Down the abyss? Shall the reverting stress
Of that resistless gulf embosom it?
Now shall it fall? — A wandering stream of wind
Breathed from the west, has caught the expanded sail,
And, lo! with gentle motion between banks
Of mossy slope, and on a placid stream,
Beneath a woven grove, it sails, and, hark!
The ghastly torrent mingles its far roar
With the breeze murmuring in the musical woods.
Where the embowering trees recede, and leave
A little space of green expanse, the cove
Is closed by meeting banks, whose yellow flowers
Forever gaze on their own drooping eyes,
Reflected in the crystal calm. The wave
Of the boat’s motion marred their pensive task,
Which naught but vagrant bird, or wanton wind,
Or falling spear-grass, or their own decay
Had e’er disturbed before. The Poet longed
To deck with their bright hues his withered hair,
But on his heart its solitude returned,
And he forbore. Not the strong impulse hid
In those flushed cheeks, bent eyes, and shadowy frame,
Had yet performed its ministry; it hung
Upon his life, as lightning in a cloud
Gleams, hovering ere it vanish, ere the floods
Of night close over it.

The noonday sun
Now shone upon the forest, one vast mass
Of mingling shade, whose brown magnificence
A narrow vale embosoms. There, huge caves,
Scooped in the dark base of their aëry rocks,
Mocking its moans, respond and roar forever.
The meeting boughs and implicated leaves
Wove twilight o'er the Poet's path, as, led
By love, or dream, or god, or mightier Death,
He sought in Nature's dearest haunt some bank,
Her cradle and his sepulchre. More dark
And dark the shades accumulate. The oak,
Expanding its immense and knotty arms,
Embraces the light beech. The pyramids
Of the tall cedar overarching frame
Most solemn domes within, and far below,
Like clouds suspended in an emerald sky,
The ash and the acacia floating hang
Tremulous and pale. Like restless serpents, clothed
In rainbow and in fire, the parasites,
Starred with ten thousand blossoms, flow around
The gray trunks, and, as gamesome infants' eyes,
With gentle meanings, and most innocent wiles,
Fold their beams round the hearts of those that love,
These twine their tendrils with the wedded boughs,
Uniting their close union; the woven leaves
Make network of the dark blue light of day
And the night's noontide clearness, mutable
As shapes in the weird clouds. Soft mossy lawns
Beneath these canopies extend their swells,
Fragrant with perfumed herbs, and eyed with blooms
Minute yet beautiful. One darkest glen
Sends from its woods of musk-rose twined with jasmine
A soul-dissolving odor to invite
To some more lovely mystery. Through the dell
Silence and Twilight here, twin-sisters, keep
Their noonday watch, and sail among the shades,

Like vaporous shapes half-seen; beyond, a well,
Dark, gleaming, and of most translucent wave,
Images all the woven boughs above,
And each depending leaf, and every speck
Of azure sky darting between their chasms;
Nor aught else in the liquid mirror laves
Its portraiture, but some inconstant star,
Between one foliaged lattice twinkling fair,
Or painted bird, sleeping beneath the moon,
Or gorgeous insect floating motionless,
Unconscious of the day, ere yet his wings
Have spread their glories to the gaze of noon.

Hither the Poet came. His eyes beheld
Their own wan light through the reflected lines
Of his thin hair, distinct in the dark depth
Of that still fountain; as the human heart,
Gazing in dreams over the gloomy grave,
Sees its own treacherous likeness there. He heard
The motion of the leaves — the grass that sprung
Startled and glanced and trembled even to feel
An unaccustomed presence — and the sound
Of the sweet brook that from the secret springs
Of that dark fountain rose. A Spirit seemed
To stand beside him — clothed in no bright robes
Of shadowy silver or enshrining light,
Borrowed from aught the visible world affords
Of grace, or majesty, or mystery;
But undulating woods, and silent well,
And leaping rivulet, and evening gloom
Now deepening the dark shades, for speech assuming,
Held commune with him, as if he and it
Were all that was; only — when his regard
Was raised by intense pensiveness — two eyes,
Two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought,
And seemed with their serene and azure smiles
To beckon him.

Obedient to the light
That shone within his soul, he went, pursuing
The windings of the dell. The rivulet,
Wanton and wild, through many a green ravine
Beneath the forest flowed. Sometimes it fell
Among the moss with hollow harmony
Dark and profound. Now on the polished stones
It danced, like childhood laughing as it went;
Then, through the plain in tranquil wanderings crept,
Reflecting every herb and drooping bud
That overhung its quietness.—'O stream!
Whose source is inaccessibly profound,
Whither do thy mysterious waters tend?
Thou imagest my life. Thy darksome stillness,
Thy dazzling waves, thy loud and hollow gulfs,
Thy searchless fountain and invisible course,
Have each their type in me; and the wide sky
And measureless ocean may declare as soon
What oozy cavern or what wandering cloud
Contains thy waters, as the universe
Tell where these living thoughts reside, when stretched
Upon thy flowers my bloodless limbs shall waste
I' the passing wind!'

Beside the grassy shore
Of the small stream he went; he did impress
On the green moss his tremulous step, that caught
Strong shuddering from his burning limbs. As one
Roused by some joyous madness from the couch
Of fever, he did move; yet not like him
Forgetful of the grave, where, when the flame
Of his frail exultation shall be spent,
He must descend. With rapid steps he went
Beneath the shade of trees, beside the flow
Of the wild babbling rivulet; and now
The forest's solemn canopies were changed
For the uniform and lightsome evening sky.

Gray rocks did peep from the spare moss, and stemmed
The struggling brook; tall spires of windlestrae
Threw their thin shadows down the rugged slope,
And nought but gnarlèd roots of ancient pines
Branchless and blasted, clenched with grasping roots
The unwilling soil. A gradual change was here
Yet ghastly. For, as fast years flow away,
The smooth brow gathers, and the hair grows thin
And white, and where irradiate dewy eyes
Had shone, gleam stony orbs: — so from his steps
Bright flowers departed, and the beautiful shade
Of the green groves, with all their odorous winds
And musical motions. Calm he still pursued
The stream, that with a larger volume now
Rolled through the labyrinthine dell; and there
Fretted a path through its descending curves
With its wintry speed. On every side now rose
Rocks, which, in unimaginable forms,
Lifted their black and barren pinnacles
In the light of evening, and its precipice
Obscuring the ravine, disclosed above,
‘Mid toppling stones, black gulfs and yawning caves,
Whose windings gave ten thousand various tongues
To the loud stream. Lo! where the pass expands
Its stony jaws, the abrupt mountain breaks,
And seems with its accumulated crags
To overhang the world; for wide expand
Beneath the wan stars and descending moon
Islanded seas, blue mountains, mighty streams,
Dim tracts and vast, robed in the lustrous gloom
Of leaden-colored even, and fiery hills
Mingling their flames with twilight, on the verge
Of the remote horizon. The near scene,
In naked and severe simplicity,
Made contrast with the universe. A pine,
Rock-rooted, stretched athwart the vacancy
Its swinging boughs, to each inconstant blast

Yielding one only response at each pause
In most familiar cadence, with the howl,
The thunder and the hiss of homeless streams
Mingling its solemn song, whilst the broad river
Foaming and hurrying o'er its rugged path,
Fell into that immeasurable void,
Scattering its waters to the passing winds.

Yet the gray precipice and solemn pine
And torrent were not all; — one silent nook
Was there. Even on the edge of that vast mountain,
Upheld by knotty roots and fallen rocks,
It overlooked in its serenity
The dark earth and the bending vault of stars.
It was a tranquil spot that seemed to smile
Even in the lap of horror. Ivy clasped
The fissured stones with its entwining arms,
And did embower with leaves forever green
And berries dark the smooth and even space
Of its inviolated floor; and here
The children of the autumnal whirlwind bore
In wanton sport those bright leaves whose decay,
Red, yellow, or ethereally pale,
Rivals the pride of summer. 'T is the haunt
Of every gentle wind whose breath can teach
The wilds to love tranquillity. One step,
One human step alone, has ever broken
The stillness of its solitude; one voice
Alone inspired its echoes; — even that voice
Which hither came, floating among the winds,
And led the loveliest among human forms
To make their wild haunts the depository
Of all the grace and beauty that endued
Its motions, render up its majesty,
Scatter its music on the unfeeling storm,
And to the damp leaves and blue cavern mould,
Nurses of rainbow flowers and branching moss,

Commit the colors of that varying cheek,
That snowy breast, those dark and drooping eyes.

The dim and hornèd moon hung low, and poured
A sea of lustre on the horizon's verge
That overflowed its mountains. Yellow mist
Filled the unbounded atmosphere, and drank
Wan moonlight even to fulness; not a star
Shone, not a sound was heard; the very winds,
Danger's grim playmates, on that precipice
Slept, clasped in his embrace. — O storm of death,
Whose sightless speed divides this sullen night!
And thou, colossal Skeleton, that, still
Guiding its irresistible career
In thy devastating omnipotence,
Art king of this frail world! from the red field
Of slaughter, from the reeking hospital,
The patriot's sacred couch, the snowy bed
Of innocence, the scaffold and the throne,
A mighty voice invokes thee! Ruin calls
His brother Death! A rare and regal prey
He hath prepared, prowling around the world;
Glutted with which thou mayst repose, and men
Go to their graves like flowers or creeping worms,
Nor ever more offer at thy dark shrine
The unheeded tribute of a broken heart.

When on the threshold of the green recess
The wanderer's footsteps fell, he knew that death
Was on him. Yet a little, ere it fled,
Did he resign his high and holy soul
To images of the majestic past,
That paused within his passive being now,
Like winds that bear sweet music, when they breathe
Through some dim latticed chamber. He did place
His pale lean hand upon the rugged trunk
Of the old pine; upon an ivied stone

Reclined his languid head; his limbs did rest,
Diffused and motionless, on the smooth brink
Of that obscurest chasm; — and thus he lay,
Surrendering to their final impulses
The hovering powers of life. Hope and Despair,
The torturers, slept; no mortal pain or fear
Marred his repose; the influxes of sense
And his own being, unalloyed by pain,
Yet feebler and more feeble, calmly fed
The stream of thought, till he lay breathing there
At peace, and faintly smiling. His last sight
Was the great moon, which o'er the western line
Of the wide world her mighty horn suspended,
With whose dun beams inwoven darkness seemed
To mingle. Now upon the jagged hills
It rests; and still as the divided frame
Of the vast meteor sunk, the Poet's blood,
That ever beat in mystic sympathy
With Nature's ebb and flow, grew feebler still;
And when two lessening points of light alone
Gleamed through the darkness, the alternate gasp
Of his faint respiration scarce did stir
The stagnate night: — till the minutest ray
Was quenched, the pulse yet lingered in his heart.
It paused — it fluttered. But when heaven remained
Utterly black, the murky shades involved
An image silent, cold, and motionless,
As their own voiceless earth and vacant air.
Even as a vapor fed with golden beams
That ministered on sunlight, ere the west
Eclipses it, was now that wondrous frame —
No sense, no motion, no divinity —
A fragile lute, on whose harmonious strings
The breath of heaven did wander — a bright stream
Once fed with many-voicèd waves — a dream
Of youth, which night and time have quenched forever —
Still, dark, and dry, and unremembered now.

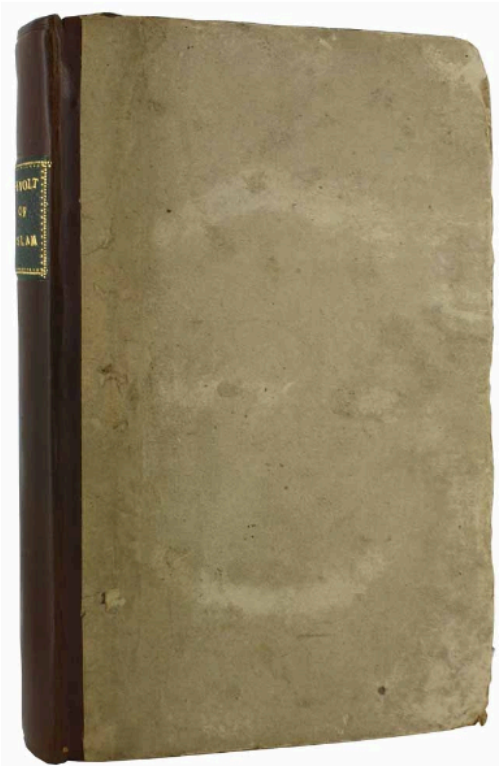
Oh, for Medea's wondrous alchemy,
Which wheresoe'er it fell made the earth gleam
With bright flowers, and the wintry boughs exhale
From vernal blooms fresh fragrance! Oh, that God,
Profuse of poisons, would concede the chalice
Which but one living man has drained, who now,
Vessel of deathless wrath, a slave that feels
No proud exemption in the blighting curse
He bears, over the world wanders forever,
Lone as incarnate death! Oh, that the dream
Of dark magician in his visioned cave,
Raking the cinders of a crucible
For life and power, even when his feeble hand
Shakes in its last decay, were the true law
Of this so lovely world! But thou art fled,
Like some frail exhalation, which the dawn
Robes in its golden beams, — ah! thou hast fled!
The brave, the gentle and the beautiful,
The child of grace and genius. Heartless things
Are done and said i' the world, and many worms
And beasts and men live on, and mighty Earth
From sea and mountain, city and wilderness,
In vesper low or joyous orison,
Lifts still its solemn voice: — but thou art fled —
Thou canst no longer know or love the shapes
Of this phantasmal scene, who have to thee
Been purest ministers, who are, alas!
Now thou art not! Upon those pallid lips
So sweet even in their silence, on those eyes
That image sleep in death, upon that form
Yet safe from the worm's outrage, let no tear
Be shed — not even in thought. Nor, when those hues
Are gone, and those divinest lineaments,
Worn by the senseless wind, shall live alone
In the frail pauses of this simple strain,
Let not high verse, mourning the memory
Of that which is no more, or painting's woe

Or sculpture, speak in feeble imagery
Their own cold powers. Art and eloquence,
And all the shows o' the world, are frail and vain
To weep a loss that turns their lights to shade.
It is a woe "too deep for tears," when all
Is reft at once, when some surpassing Spirit,
Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves
Those who remain behind, not sobs or groans,
The passionate tumult of a clinging hope;
But pale despair and cold tranquillity,
Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
Birth and the grave, that are not as they were.

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

This poem of twelve cantos was composed by Shelley in 1817 and originally published under the title *Laon and Cythna* in December of that year. Shelley composed the work while living near Bisham Wood in Buckinghamshire. The plot concerns the characters Laon and Cythna who initiate a revolution against the despotic ruler of the fictional state of Argolis, modelled on the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. In spite of its title, the poem has little to do with the religion of Islam in particular, but is instead a symbolic parable on liberation and revolutionary idealism following the disillusionment of the French Revolution.

The poem is composed of Spenserian stanzas, with each stanza containing nine lines in total: eight lines in iambic pentameter followed by a single Alexandrine line in iambic hexameter. As the poem opens, Laon and Cythna live in daydreams of delight. This tranquillity is soon shattered. The troops of Othman, a tyrant, come and seize Cythna for Othman's harem as food "To the hyena lust, who, among graves, Over his loathed meal, laughing in agony, raves." Laon, reacts by killing three of the attackers. The remaining troops drag him away to await his punishment in a prison. Laon suffers from thirst and hunger but seeks to find Cythna. A white sail is set on the bay below him, and he feels that the vessel is destined to bear Cythna from the shore.



The first edition

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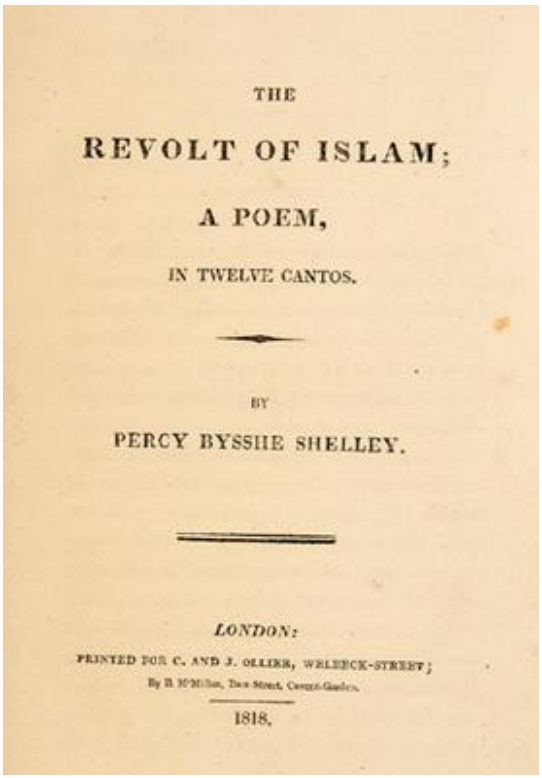

THE

REVOLT OF ISLAM;

A POEM,

IN TWELVE CANTOS.

BY

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR C. AND J. OLLIER, WELBECK-STREET;

By B. McMillan, Bow-Street, Covent-Garden.

1818.

The first edition's title page

Introductory Note

The Revolt of Islam is a return to the social and political propaganda of *Queen Mab,* though the narrative element is stronger and the ideal characterization is along the more human lines of *Alastor.* It belongs distinctly in the class of reform poems and obeys a didactic motive in the same way as does the *Faerie Queene,* in the stanza of which it is written. It was composed in the spring and summer of 1817, and embodies the opinions of Shelley nearly as completely as *Queen Mab* had done, five years earlier. It was printed under the title *Laon and Cythna; or, The Revolution of the Golden City: A Vision of the Nineteenth Century;* a few copies only were issued, when the publisher refused to proceed with the work unless radical alterations were made in the text. Shelley reluctantly consented to this, and made the required changes. The title was altered, and the work published. The circumstances under which the poem was written are told by Mrs. Shelley, with a word upon the main characters:

'He chose for his hero a youth nourished in dreams of liberty, some of whose actions are in direct opposition to the opinions of the world, but who is animated throughout by an ardent love of virtue, and a resolution to confer the boons of political and intellectual freedom on his fellow-creatures. He created for this youth a woman such as he delighted to imagine — full of enthusiasm for the same objects; and they both, with will unvanquished and the deepest sense of the justice of their cause, met adversity and death. There exists in this poem a memorial of a friend of his youth. The character of the old man who liberates Laon from his tower prison, and tends on him in sickness, is founded on that of Doctor Lind, who, when Shelley was at Eton, had often stood by to befriend and support him, and whose name he never mentioned without love and veneration.

'During the year 1817 we were established at Marlow, in Buckinghamshire. Shelley's choice of abode was fixed chiefly by this town being at no great distance from London, and its neighborhood to the Thames. The poem was written in his boat, as it floated under the beech groves of Bisham, or during wanderings in the neighboring country, which is distinguished for peculiar beauty. The chalk hills break into cliffs that overhang the Thames, or form valleys clothed with beech; the wilder portion of the country is rendered beautiful by exuberant vegetation; and the

cultivated part is peculiarly fertile. With all this wealth of nature which, either in the form of gentlemen's parks or soil dedicated to agriculture, flourishes around, Marlow was inhabited (I hope it is altered now) by a very poor population. The women are lacemakers, and lose their health by sedentary labor, for which they were very ill paid. The poor-laws ground to the dust not only the paupers, but those who had risen just above that state, and were obliged to pay poor-rates. The changes produced by peace following a long war, and a bad harvest, brought with them the most heart-rending evils to the poor. Shelley afforded what alleviation he could. In the winter, while bringing out his poem, he had a severe attack of ophthalmia, caught while visiting the poor cottages. I mention these things, — for this minute and active sympathy with his fellow-creatures gives a thousand-fold interest to his speculations, and stamps with reality his pleadings for the human race.'

Shelley himself gave two accounts of the poem, of which the most interesting occurs in a letter to Godwin, December 11, 1817:

'The Poem was produced by a series of thoughts which filled my mind with unbounded and sustained enthusiasm. I felt the precariousness of my life, and I engaged in this task, resolved to leave some record of myself. Much of what the volume contains was written with the same feeling, as real, though not so prophetic, as the communications of a dying man. I never presumed indeed to consider it anything approaching to faultless; but when I consider contemporary productions of the same apparent pretensions, I own I was filled with confidence. I felt that it was in many respects a genuine picture of my own mind. I felt that the sentiments were true, not assumed. And in this have I long believed that my power consists; in sympathy and that part of the imagination which relates to sentiment and contemplation. I am formed, if for anything not in common with the herd of mankind, to apprehend minute and remote distinctions of feeling, whether relative to external nature or the living beings which surround us, and to communicate the conceptions which result from considering either the moral or the material universe as a whole. Of course, I believe these faculties, which perhaps comprehend all that is sublime in man, to exist very imperfectly in my own mind.'

The second is contained in an earlier letter to a publisher, October 13, 1817:

‘The whole poem, with the exception of the first canto and part of the last, is a mere human story without the smallest intermixture of supernatural interference. The first canto is, indeed, in some measure a distinct poem, though very necessary to the wholeness of the work. I say this because, if it were all written in the manner of the first canto, I could not expect that it would be interesting to any great number of people. I have attempted in the progress of my work to speak to the common elementary emotions of the human heart, so that, though it is the story of violence and revolution, it is relieved by milder pictures of friendship and love and natural affections. The scene is supposed to be laid in Constantinople and modern Greece, but without much attempt at minute delineation of Mahometan manners. It is, in fact, a tale illustrative of such a revolution as might be supposed to take place in an European nation, acted upon by the opinions of what has been called (erroneously, as I think) the modern philosophy, and contending with ancient notions and the supposed advantage derived from them to those who support them. It is a Revolution of this kind that is the *beau idéal,* as it were, of the French Revolution, but produced by the influence of individual genius and out of general knowledge.’

Peacock supplements Mrs. Shelley’s note, with some details of the revision:

‘In the summer of 1817 he wrote *The Revolt of Islam,* chiefly on a seat on a high prominence in Bisham Wood where he passed whole mornings with a blank book and a pencil. This work when completed was printed under the title of *Laon and Cythna.* In this poem he had carried the expression of his opinions, moral, political, and theological, beyond the bounds of discretion. The terror which, in those days of persecution of the press, the perusal of the book inspired in Mr. Ollier, the publisher, induced him to solicit the alteration of many passages which he had marked. Shelley was for some time inflexible; but Mr. Ollier’s refusal to publish the poem as it was, backed by the advice of all his friends, induced him to submit to the required changes.’

Shelley subsequently revised the poem still more, in expectation of a second edition, but the changes so made are now unknown. Author’s Preface

The Poem which I now present to the world is an attempt from which I scarcely dare to expect success, and in which a writer of established fame might fail without disgrace. It is an experiment on the temper of the public

mind as to how far a thirst for a happier condition of moral and political society survives, among the enlightened and refined, the tempests which have shaken the age in which we live. I have sought to enlist the harmony of metrical language, the ethereal combinations of the fancy, the rapid and subtle transitions of human passion, all those elements which essentially compose a poem, in the cause of a liberal and comprehensive morality; and in the view of kindling within the bosoms of my readers a virtuous enthusiasm for those doctrines of liberty and justice, that faith and hope in something good, which neither violence, nor misrepresentation, nor prejudice, can ever totally extinguish among mankind.

For this purpose I have chosen a story of human passion in its most universal character, diversified with moving and romantic adventures, and appealing, in contempt of all artificial opinions or institutions, to the common sympathies of every human breast. I have made no attempt to recommend the motives which I would substitute for those at present governing mankind, by methodical and systematic argument. I would only awaken the feelings, so that the reader should see the beauty of true virtue, and be incited to those inquiries which have led to my moral and political creed, and that of some of the sublimest intellects in the world. The Poem therefore (with the exception of the first Canto, which is purely introductory) is narrative, not didactic. It is a succession of pictures illustrating the growth and progress of individual mind aspiring after excellence and devoted to the love of mankind; its influence in refining and making pure the most daring and uncommon impulses of the imagination, the understanding, and the senses; its impatience at ‘all the oppressions which are done under the sun;’ its tendency to awaken public hope and to enlighten and improve mankind; the rapid effects of the application of that tendency; the awakening of an immense nation from their slavery and degradation to a true sense of moral dignity and freedom; the bloodless dethronement of their oppressors and the unveiling of the religious frauds by which they had been deluded into submission; the tranquillity of successful patriotism and the universal toleration and benevolence of true philanthropy; the treachery and barbarity of hired soldiers; vice not the object of punishment and hatred, but kindness and pity; the faithlessness of tyrants; the confederacy of the Rulers of the World and the restoration of the expelled Dynasty by foreign arms; the massacre and extermination of the Patriots and the victory of established power; the consequences of

legitimate despotism, — civil war, famine, plague, superstition, and an utter extinction of the domestic affections; the judicial murder of the advocates of liberty; the temporary triumph of oppression, that secure earnest of its final and inevitable fall; the transient nature of ignorance and error and the eternity of genius and virtue. Such is the series of delineations of which the Poem consists. And if the lofty passions with which it has been my scope to distinguish this story shall not excite in the reader a generous impulse, an ardent thirst for excellence, an interest profound and strong, such as belongs to no meaner desires, let not the failure be imputed to a natural unfitness for human sympathy in these sublime and animating themes. It is the business of the poet to communicate to others the pleasure and the enthusiasm arising out of those images and feelings in the vivid presence of which within his own mind consists at once his inspiration and his reward.

The panic which, like an epidemic transport, seized upon all classes of men during the excesses consequent upon the French Revolution, is gradually giving place to sanity. It has ceased to be believed that whole generations of mankind ought to consign themselves to a hopeless inheritance of ignorance and misery because a nation of men who had been dupes and slaves for centuries were incapable of conducting themselves with the wisdom and tranquillity of freemen so soon as some of their fetters were partially loosened. That their conduct could not have been marked by any other characters than ferocity and thoughtlessness is the historical fact from which liberty derives all its recommendations, and falsehood the worst features of its deformity. There is a reflux in the tide of human things which bears the shipwrecked hopes of men into a secure haven after the storms are past. Methinks those who now live have survived an age of despair.

The French Revolution may be considered as one of those manifestations of a general state of feeling among civilized mankind, produced by a defect of correspondence between the knowledge existing in society and the improvement or gradual abolition of political institutions. The year 1788 may be assumed as the epoch of one of the most important crises produced by this feeling. The sympathies connected with that event extended to every bosom. The most generous and amiable natures were those which participated the most extensively in these sympathies. But such a degree of unmingled good was expected as it was impossible to realize. If the Revolution had been in every respect prosperous, then misrule and superstition would lose half their claims to our abhorrence, as fetters which

the captive can unlock with the slightest motion of his fingers, and which do not eat with poisonous rust into the soul. The revulsion occasioned by the atrocities of the demagogues and the reëstablishment of successive tyrannies in France was terrible, and felt in the remotest corner of the civilized world. Could they listen to the plea of reason who had groaned under the calamities of a social state, according to the provisions of which one man riots in luxury whilst another famishes for want of bread? Can he who the day before was a trampled slave suddenly become liberal-minded, forbearing, and independent? This is the consequence of the habits of a state of society to be produced by resolute perseverance and indefatigable hope, and long-suffering and long-believing courage, and the systematic efforts of generations of men of intellect and virtue. Such is the lesson which experience teaches now. But on the first reverses of hope in the progress of French liberty, the sanguine eagerness for good overleapt the solution of these questions, and for a time extinguished itself in the unexpectedness of their result. Thus many of the most ardent and tender-hearted of the worshippers of public good have been morally ruined by what a partial glimpse of the events they deplored appeared to show as the melancholy desolation of all their cherished hopes. Hence gloom and misanthropy have become the characteristics of the age in which we live, the solace of a disappointment that unconsciously finds relief only in the wilful exaggeration of its own despair. This influence has tainted the literature of the age with the hopelessness of the minds from which it flows. Metaphysics, and inquiries into moral and political science, have become little else than vain attempts to revive exploded superstitions, or sophisms like those of Mr. Malthus, calculated to lull the oppressors of mankind into a security of everlasting triumph. Our works of fiction and poetry have been overshadowed by the same infectious gloom. But mankind appear to me to be emerging from their trance. I am aware, methinks, of a slow, gradual, silent change. In that belief I have composed the following Poem.

I do not presume to enter into competition with our greatest contemporary poets. Yet I am unwilling to tread in the footsteps of any who have preceded me. I have sought to avoid the imitation of any style of language or versification peculiar to the original minds of which it is the character, designing that even if what I have produced be worthless, it should still be properly my own. Nor have I permitted any system relating to mere words to divert the attention of the reader from whatever interest I

may have succeeded in creating, to my own ingenuity in contriving to disgust them according to the rules of criticism. I have simply clothed my thoughts in what appeared to me the most obvious and appropriate language. A person familiar with Nature, and with the most celebrated productions of the human mind, can scarcely err in following the instinct, with respect to selection of language, produced by that familiarity.

There is an education peculiarly fitted for a poet, without which genius and sensibility can hardly fill the circle of their capacities. No education indeed can entitle to this appellation a dull and unobservant mind, or one, though neither dull nor unobservant, in which the channels of communication between thought and expression have been obstructed or closed. How far it is my fortune to belong to either of the latter classes I cannot know. I aspire to be something better. The circumstances of my accidental education have been favorable to this ambition. I have been familiar from boyhood with mountains and lakes, and the sea, and the solitude of forests; Danger which sports upon the brink of precipices has been my playmate. I have trodden the glaciers of the Alps, and lived under the eye of Mont Blanc. I have been a wanderer among distant fields. I have sailed down mighty rivers, and seen the sun rise and set, and the stars come forth, whilst I have sailed night and day down a rapid stream among mountains. I have seen populous cities, and have watched the passions which rise and spread, and sink and change, amongst assembled multitudes of men. I have seen the theatre of the more visible ravages of tyranny and war, cities and villages reduced to scattered groups of black and roofless houses, and the naked inhabitants sitting famished upon their desolated thresholds. I have conversed with living men of genius. The poetry of ancient Greece and Rome, and modern Italy, and our own country, has been to me like external nature, a passion and an enjoyment. Such are the sources from which the materials for the imagery of my Poem have been drawn. I have considered poetry in its most comprehensive sense, and have read the poets and the historians, and the metaphysicians whose writings have been accessible to me, and have looked upon the beautiful and majestic scenery of the earth, as common sources of those elements which it is the province of the poet to embody and combine. Yet the experience and the feelings to which I refer do not in themselves constitute men poets, but only prepares them to be the auditors of those who are. How far I shall be found to possess that more essential attribute of poetry, the power of awakening in

others sensations like those which animate my own bosom, is that which, to speak sincerely, I know not; and which, with an acquiescent and contented spirit, I expect to be taught by the effect which I shall produce upon those whom I now address.

I have avoided, as I have said before, the imitation of any contemporary style. But there must be a resemblance, which does not depend upon their own will, between all the writers of any particular age. They cannot escape from subjection to a common influence which arises out of an infinite combination of circumstances belonging to the times in which they live, though each is in a degree the author of the very influence by which his being is thus pervaded. Thus, the tragic poets of the age of Pericles; the Italian revivers of ancient learning; those mighty intellects of our own country that succeeded the Reformation, the translators of the Bible, Shakespeare, Spenser, the Dramatists of the reign of Elizabeth, and Lord Bacon; the colder spirits of the interval that succeeded; — all resemble each other, and differ from every other in their several classes. In this view of things, Ford can no more be called the imitator of Shakespeare than Shakespeare the imitator of Ford. There were perhaps few other points of resemblance between these two men than that which the universal and inevitable influence of their age produced. And this is an influence which neither the meanest scribbler nor the sublimest genius of any era can escape; and which I have not attempted to escape.

I have adopted the stanza of Spenser (a measure inexpressibly beautiful) not because I consider it a finer model of poetical harmony than the blank verse of Shakespeare and Milton, but because in the latter there is no shelter for mediocrity; you must either succeed or fail. This perhaps an aspiring spirit should desire. But I was enticed also by the brilliancy and magnificence of sound which a mind that has been nourished upon musical thoughts can produce by a just and harmonious arrangement of the pauses of this measure. Yet there will be found some instances where I have completely failed in this attempt, and one, which I here request the reader to consider as an erratum, where there is left most inadvertently an alexandrine in the middle of a stanza.

But in this, as in every other respect, I have written fearlessly. It is the misfortune of this age that its writers, too thoughtless of immortality, are exquisitely sensible to temporary praise or blame. They write with the fear of Reviews before their eyes. This system of criticism sprang up in that

torpid interval when poetry was not. Poetry and the art which professes to regulate and limit its powers cannot subsist together. Longinus could not have been the contemporary of Homer, nor Boileau of Horace. Yet this species of criticism never presumed to assert an understanding of its own; it has always, unlike true science, followed, not preceded the opinion of mankind, and would even now bribe with worthless adulation some of our greatest poets to impose gratuitous fetters on their own imaginations and become unconscious accomplices in the daily murder of all genius either not so aspiring or not so fortunate as their own. I have sought therefore to write, as I believe that Homer, Shakespeare, and Milton wrote, with an utter disregard of anonymous censure. I am certain that calumny and misrepresentation, though it may move me to compassion, cannot disturb my peace. I shall understand the expressive silence of those sagacious enemies who dare not trust themselves to speak. I shall endeavor to extract from the midst of insult and contempt and maledictions those admonitions which may tend to correct whatever imperfections such censurers may discover in this my first serious appeal to the public. If certain critics were as clear-sighted as they are malignant, how great would be the benefit to be derived from their virulent writings! As it is, I fear I shall be malicious enough to be amused with their paltry tricks and lame invectives. Should the public judge that my composition is worthless, I shall indeed bow before the tribunal from which Milton received his crown of immortality, and shall seek to gather, if I live, strength from that defeat, which may nerve me to some new enterprise of thought which may *not* be worthless. I cannot conceive that Lucretius, when he meditated that poem whose doctrines are yet the basis of our metaphysical knowledge and whose eloquence has been the wonder of mankind, wrote in awe of such censure as the hired sophists of the impure and superstitious noblemen of Rome might affix to what he should produce. It was at the period when Greece was led captive and Asia made tributary to the Republic, fast verging itself to slavery and ruin, that a multitude of Syrian captives, bigoted to the worship of their obscene Ashtaroth, and the unworthy successors of Socrates and Zeno, found there a precarious subsistence by administering, under the name of freedmen, to the vices and vanities of the great. These wretched men were skilled to plead, with a superficial but plausible set of sophisms, in favor of that contempt for virtue which is the portion of slaves, and that faith in portents, the most fatal substitute for benevolence in the imaginations of men, which arising

from the enslaved communities of the East then first began to overwhelm the western nations in its stream. Were these the kind of men whose disapprobation the wise and lofty-minded Lucretius should have regarded with a salutary awe? The latest and perhaps the meanest of those who follow in his footsteps would disdain to hold life on such conditions.

The Poem now presented to the public occupied little more than six months in the composition. That period has been devoted to the task with unremitting ardor and enthusiasm. I have exercised a watchful and earnest criticism on my work as it grew under my hands. I would willingly have sent it forth to the world with that perfection which long labor and revision is said to bestow. But I found that if I should gain something in exactness by this method, I might lose much of the newness and energy of imagery and language as it flowed fresh from my mind. And although the mere composition occupied no more than six months, the thoughts thus arranged were slowly gathered in as many years.

I trust that the reader will carefully distinguish between those opinions which have a dramatic propriety in reference to the characters which they are designed to elucidate, and such as are properly my own. The erroneous and degrading idea which men have conceived of a Supreme Being, for instance, is spoken against, but not the Supreme Being itself. The belief which some superstitious persons whom I have brought upon the stage entertain of the Deity, as injurious to the character of his benevolence, is widely different from my own. In recommending also a great and important change in the spirit which animates the social institutions of mankind, I have avoided all flattery to those violent and malignant passions of our nature which are ever on the watch to mingle with and to alloy the most beneficial innovations. There is no quarter given to revenge, or envy, or prejudice. Love is celebrated everywhere as the sole law which should govern the moral world.

In *Laon and Cythna* the following passage was added, in conclusion:

In the personal conduct of my hero and heroine, there is one circumstance which was intended to startle the reader from the trance of ordinary life. It was my object to break through the crust of those outworn opinions on which established institutions depend. I have appealed therefore to the most universal of all feelings, and have endeavored to strengthen the moral sense by forbidding it to waste its energies in seeking to avoid actions which are only crimes of convention. It is because there is so great a

multitude of artificial vices that there are so few real virtues. Those feelings alone which are benevolent or malevolent are essentially good or bad. The circumstance of which I speak was introduced, however, merely to accustom men to that charity and toleration which the exhibition of a practice widely differing from their own has a tendency to promote. Nothing indeed can be more mischievous than many actions innocent in themselves which might bring down upon individuals the bigoted contempt and rage of the multitude.

Dedication

There is no danger to a man that knows
What life and death is: there's not any law
Exceeds his knowledge; neither is it lawful
That he should stoop to any other law.
CHAPMAN.

To Mary —— ——

I

SO now my summer-task is ended, Mary,
And I return to thee, mine own heart's home;
As to his Queen some victor knight of Faëry,
Earning bright spoils for her enchanted dome;
Nor thou disdain, that ere my fame become
A star among the stars of mortal night,
If it indeed may cleave its natal gloom,
Its doubtful promise thus I would unite
With thy belovèd name, thou Child of love and light.

II

The toil which stole from thee so many an hour,
Is ended, — and the fruit is at thy feet!
No longer where the woods to frame a bower
With interlacèd branches mix and meet,
Or where, with sound like many voices sweet,
Water-falls leap among wild islands green,
Which framed for my lone boat a lone retreat
Of moss-grown trees and weeds, shall I be seen;
But beside thee, where still my heart has ever been.

III

Thoughts of great deeds were mine, dear Friend, when first
The clouds which wrap this world from youth did pass.
I do remember well the hour which burst
My spirit's sleep. A fresh May-dawn it was,
When I walked forth upon the glittering grass,
And wept, I knew not why; until there rose
From the near school-room voices that, alas!
Were but one echo from a world of woes —
The harsh and grating strife of tyrants and of foes.

IV

And then I clasped my hands and looked around,
But none was near to mock my streaming eyes,
Which poured their warm drops on the sunny ground —
So without shame I spake:—'I will be wise,
And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
Such power, for I grow weary to behold
The selfish and the strong still tyrannize
Without reproach or check.' I then controlled
My tears, my heart grew calm, and I was meek and bold.

V

And from that hour did I with earnest thought
Heap knowledge from forbidden mines of lore;
Yet nothing that my tyrants knew or taught
I cared to learn, but from that secret store
Wrought linkèd armor for my soul, before
It might walk forth to war among mankind;
Thus power and hope were strengthened more and more
Within me, till there came upon my mind
A sense of loneliness, a thirst with which I pined.

VI

Alas, that love should be a blight and snare
To those who seek all sympathies in one!

Such once I sought in vain; then black despair,
The shadow of a starless night, was thrown
Over the world in which I moved alone: —
Yet never found I one not false to me,
Hard hearts, and cold, like weights of icy stone
Which crushed and withered mine, that could not be
Aught but a lifeless clog, until revived by thee.

VII

Thou Friend, whose presence on my wintry heart
Fell, like bright Spring upon some herbless plain;
How beautiful and calm and free thou wert
In thy young wisdom, when the mortal chain
Of Custom thou didst burst and rend in twain,
And walked as free as light the clouds among,
Which many an envious slave then breathed in vain
From his dim dungeon, and my spirit sprung
To meet thee from the woes which had begirt it long!

VIII

No more alone through the world's wilderness,
Although I trod the paths of high intent,
I journeyed now; no more companionless,
Where solitude is like despair, I went.
There is the wisdom of a stern content
When Poverty can blight the just and good,
When Infamy dares mock the innocent,
And cherished friends turn with the multitude
To trample: this was ours, and we unshaken stood!

IX

Now has descended a serener hour,
And with inconstant fortune, friends return;
Though suffering leaves the knowledge and the power
Which says, — Let scorn be not repaid with scorn.

And from thy side two gentle babes are born
To fill our home with smiles, and thus are we
Most fortunate beneath life's beaming morn;
And these delights, and thou, have been to me
The parents of the Song I consecrate to thee.

X

Is it that now my inexperienced fingers
But strike the prelude of a loftier strain?
Or must the lyre on which my spirit lingers
Soon pause in silence, ne'er to sound again,
Though it might shake the Anarch Custom's reign,
And charm the minds of men to Truth's own sway,
Holier than was Amphion's? I would fain
Reply in hope — but I am worn away,
And Death and Love are yet contending for their prey.

XI

And what art thou? I know, but dare not speak:
Time may interpret to his silent years.
Yet in the paleness of thy thoughtful cheek,
And in the light thine ample forehead wears,
And in thy sweetest smiles, and in thy tears,
And in thy gentle speech, a prophecy
Is whispered to subdue my fondest fears;
And, through thine eyes, even in thy soul I see
A lamp of vestal fire burning internally.

XII

They say that thou wert lovely from thy birth,
Of glorious parents thou aspiring Child!
I wonder not — for One then left this earth
Whose life was like a setting planet mild,
Which clothed thee in the radiance undefiled
Of its departing glory; still her fame

Shines on thee, through the tempests dark and wild
Which shake these latter days; and thou canst claim
The shelter, from thy Sire, of an immortal name.

XIII

One voice came forth from many a mighty spirit,
Which was the echo of three thousand years;
And the tumultuous world stood mute to hear it,
As some lone man who in a desert hears
The music of his home: — unwonted fears
Fell on the pale oppressors of our race,
And Faith, and Custom, and low-thoughted cares,
Like thunder-stricken dragons, for a space
Left the torn human heart, their food and dwelling-place.

XIV

Truth's deathless voice pauses among mankind!
If there must be no response to my cry —
If men must rise and stamp with fury blind
On his pure name who loves them, — thou and I,
Sweet Friend! can look from our tranquillity
Like lamps into the world's tempestuous night, —
Two tranquil stars, while clouds are passing by
Which wrap them from the foundering seaman's sight,
That burn from year to year with unextinguished light.

REVOLT OF ISLAM: Canto First

I

WHEN the last hope of trampled France had failed
Like a brief dream of unremaining glory,
From visions of despair I rose, and scaled
The peak of an aërial promontory,
Whose caverned base with the vexed surge was hoary;
And saw the golden dawn break forth, and waken
Each cloud and every wave: — but transitory
The calm; for sudden, the firm earth was shaken,
As if by the last wreck its frame were overtaken.

II

So as I stood, one blast of muttering thunder
Burst in far peals along the waveless deep,
When, gathering fast, around, above and under,
Long trains of tremulous mist began to creep,
Until their complicating lines did steep
The orient sun in shadow: — not a sound
Was heard; one horrible repose did keep
The forests and the floods, and all around
Darkness more dread than night was poured upon the ground.

III

Hark! ‘t is the rushing of a wind that sweeps
Earth and the ocean. See! the lightnings yawn,
Deluging Heaven with fire, and the lashed deeps
Glitter and boil beneath! it rages on,
One mighty stream, whirlwind and waves upthrown,
Lightning, and hail, and darkness eddying by!
There is a pause — the sea-birds, that were gone
Into their caves to shriek, come forth to spy
What calm has fall’n on earth, what light is in the sky.

IV

For, where the irresistible storm had cloven
That fearful darkness, the blue sky was seen,
Fretted with many a fair cloud interwoven
Most delicately, and the ocean green,
Beneath that opening spot of blue serene,
Quivered like burning emerald; calm was spread
On all below; but far on high, between
Earth and the upper air, the vast clouds fled,
Countless and swift as leaves on autumn's tempest shed.

V

For ever as the war became more fierce
Between the whirlwinds and the rack on high,
That spot grew more serene; blue light did pierce
The woof of those white clouds, which seemed to lie
Far, deep and motionless; while through the sky
The pallid semicircle of the moon
Passed on, in slow and moving majesty;
Its upper horn arrayed in mists, which soon,
But slowly, fled, like dew beneath the beams of noon.

VI

I could not choose but gaze; a fascination
Dwelt in that moon, and sky, and clouds, which drew
My fancy thither, and in expectation
Of what I knew not, I remained. The hue
Of the white moon, amid that heaven so blue
Suddenly stained with shadow did appear;
A speck, a cloud, a shape, approaching grew,
Like a great ship in the sun's sinking sphere
Beheld afar at sea, and swift it came anear.

VII

Even like a bark, which from a chasm of mountains,
Dark, vast and overhanging, on a river
Which there collects the strength of all its fountains,
Comes forth, whilst with the speed its frame doth quiver,
Sails, oars and stream, tending to one endeavor;
So, from that chasm of light a wingèd Form
On all the winds of heaven approaching ever
Floated, dilating as it came; the storm
Pursued it with fierce blasts, and lightnings swift and warm.

VIII

A course precipitous, of dizzy speed,
Suspending thought and breath; a monstrous sight!
For in the air do I behold indeed
An Eagle and a Serpent wreathed in fight: —
And now, relaxing its impetuous flight,
Before the aërial rock on which I stood,
The Eagle, hovering, wheeled to left and right,
And hung with lingering wings over the flood,
And startled with its yells the wide air's solitude.

IX

A shaft of light upon its wings descended,
And every golden feather gleamed therein —
Feather and scale inextricably blended.
The Serpent's mailed and many-colored skin
Shone through the plumes its coils were twined within
By many a swollen and knotted fold, and high
And far, the neck receding lithe and thin,
Sustained a crested head, which warily
Shifted and glanced before the Eagle's steadfast eye.

X

Around, around, in ceaseless circles wheeling
With clang of wings and scream, the Eagle sailed

Incessantly — sometimes on high concealing
Its lessening orbs, sometimes as if it failed,
Drooped through the air; and still it shrieked and wailed,
And casting back its eager head, with beak
And talon unremittingly assailed
The wreathèd Serpent, who did ever seek
Upon his enemy's heart a mortal wound to wreak.

XI

What life, what power, was kindled and arose
Within the sphere of that appalling fray!
For, from the encounter of those wondrous foes,
A vapor like the sea's suspended spray
Hung gathered; in the void air, far away,
Floated the shattered plumes; bright scales did leap,
Where'er the Eagle's talons made their way,
Like sparks into the darkness; — as they sweep,
Blood stains the snowy foam of the tumultuous deep.

XII

Swift chances in that combat — many a check,
And many a change, a dark and wild turmoil!
Sometimes the Snake around his enemy's neck
Locked in stiff rings his adamantine coil,
Until the Eagle, faint with pain and toil,
Remitted his strong flight, and near the sea
Languidly fluttered, hopeless so to foil
His adversary, who then reared on high
His red and burning crest, radiant with victory.

XIII

Then on the white edge of the bursting surge,
Where they had sunk together, would the Snake
Relax his suffocating grasp, and scourge
The wind with his wild writhings; for, to break

That chain of torment, the vast bird would shake
The strength of his unconquerable wings
As in despair, and with his sinewy neck
Dissolve in sudden shock those linkèd rings —
Then soar, as swift as smoke from a volcano springs.

XIV

Wile baffled wile, and strength encountered strength,
Thus long, but unprevailing. The event
Of that portentous fight appeared at length.
Until the lamp of day was almost spent
It had endured, when lifeless, stark and rent,
Hung high that mighty Serpent, and at last
Fell to the sea, while o'er the continent
With clang of wings and scream the Eagle passed,
Heavily borne away on the exhausted blast.

XV

And with it fled the tempest, so that ocean
And earth and sky shone through the atmosphere;
Only, 't was strange to see the red commotion
Of waves like mountains o'er the sinking sphere
Of sunset sweep, and their fierce roar to hear
Amid the calm; down the steep path I wound
To the sea-shore — the evening was most clear
And beautiful, and there the sea I found
Calm as a cradled child in dreamless slumber bound.

XVI

There was a Woman, beautiful as morning,
Sitting beneath the rocks upon the sand
Of the waste sea — fair as one flower adorning
An icy wilderness; each delicate hand
Lay crossed upon her bosom, and the band
Of her dark hair had fall'n, and so she sate

Looking upon the waves; on the bare strand
Upon the sea-mark a small boat did wait,
Fair as herself, like Love by Hope left desolate.

XVII

It seemed that this fair Shape had looked upon
That unimaginable fight, and now
That her sweet eyes were weary of the sun,
As brightly it illustrated her woe;
For in the tears, which silently to flow
Paused not, its lustre hung: she, watching aye
The foam-wreaths which the faint tide wove below
Upon the spangled sands, groaned heavily,
And after every groan looked up over the sea.

XVIII

And when she saw the wounded Serpent make
His path between the waves, her lips grew pale,
Parted and quivered; the tears ceased to break
From her immovable eyes; no voice of wail
Escaped her; but she rose, and on the gale
Loosening her star-bright robe and shadowy hair,
Poured forth her voice; the caverns of the vale
That opened to the ocean, caught it there,
And filled with silver sounds the overflowing air.

XIX

She spake in language whose strange melody
Might not belong to earth. I heard alone
What made its music more melodious be,
The pity and the love of every tone;
But to the Snake those accents sweet were known
His native tongue and hers; nor did he beat
The hoar spray idly then, but winding on

Through the green shadows of the waves that meet
Near to the shore, did pause beside her snowy feet.

XX

Then on the sands the Woman sate again,
And wept and clasped her hands, and, all between,
Renewed the unintelligible strain
Of her melodious voice and eloquent mien;
And she unveiled her bosom, and the green
And glancing shadows of the sea did play
O'er its marmoreal depth — one moment seen,
For ere the next, the Serpent did obey
Her voice, and, coiled in rest, in her embrace it lay.

XXI

Then she arose, and smiled on me with eyes
Serene yet sorrowing, like that planet fair,
While yet the daylight lingereth in the skies,
Which cleaves with arrowy beams the dark-red air,
And said: 'To grieve is wise, but the despair
Was weak and vain which led thee here from sleep.
This shalt thou know, and more, if thou dost dare
With me and with this Serpent, o'er the deep,
A voyage divine and strange, companionship to keep.'

XXII

Her voice was like the wildest, saddest tone,
Yet sweet, of some loved voice heard long ago.
I wept. Shall this fair woman all alone
Over the sea with that fierce Serpent go?
His head is on her heart, and who can know
How soon he may devour his feeble prey? —
Such were my thoughts, when the tide 'gan to flow;
And that strange boat like the moon's shade did sway
Amid reflected stars that in the waters lay.

XXIII

A boat of rare device, which had no sail
But its own curvèd prow of thin moonstone,
Wrought like a web of texture fine and frail,
To catch those gentlest winds which are not known
To breathe, but by the steady speed alone
With which it cleaves the sparkling sea; and now
We are embarked — the mountains hang and frown
Over the starry deep that gleams below
A vast and dim expanse, as o'er the waves we go.

XXIV

And as we sailed, a strange and awful tale
That Woman told, like such mysterious dream
As makes the slumberer's cheek with wonder pale!
'T was midnight, and around, a shoreless stream,
Wide ocean rolled, when that majestic theme
Shrined in her heart found utterance, and she bent
Her looks on mine; those eyes a kindling beam
Of love divine into my spirit sent,
And, ere her lips could move, made the air eloquent.

XXV

'Speak not to me, but hear! much shalt thou learn,
Much must remain unthought, and more untold,
In the dark Future's ever-flowing urn.
Know then that from the depth of ages old
Two Powers o'er mortal things dominion hold,
Ruling the world with a divided lot,
Immortal, all-pervading, manifold,
Twin Genii, equal Gods — when life and thought
Sprang forth, they burst the womb of inessential Nought.

XXVI

‘The earliest dweller of the world alone
Stood on the verge of chaos. Lo! afar
O’er the wide wild abyss two meteors shone,
Sprung from the depth of its tempestuous jar —
A blood-red Comet and the Morning Star
Mingling their beams in combat. As he stood
All thoughts within his mind waged mutual war
In dreadful sympathy — when to the flood
That fair Star fell, he turned and shed his brother’s blood.

XXVII

‘Thus Evil triumphed, and the Spirit of Evil,
One Power of many shapes which none may know,
One Shape of many names; the Fiend did revel
In victory, reigning o’er a world of woe,
For the new race of man went to and fro,
Famished and homeless, loathed and loathing, wild,
And hating good — for his immortal foe,
He changed from starry shape, beauteous and mild,
To a dire Snake, with man and beast unreconciled.

XXVIII

‘The darkness lingering o’er the dawn of things
Was Evil’s breath and life; this made him strong
To soar aloft with overshadowing wings;
And the great Spirit of Good did creep among
The nations of mankind, and every tongue
Cursed and blasphemed him as he passed; for none
Knew good from evil, though their names were hung
In mockery o’er the fane where many a groan,
As King, and Lord, and God, the conquering Fiend did own.

XXIX

‘The Fiend, whose name was Legion: Death, Decay,
Earthquake and Blight, and Want, and Madness pale,

Wingèd and wan diseases, an array
Numerous as leaves that strew the autumnal gale;
Poison, a snake in flowers, beneath the veil
Of food and mirth, hiding his mortal head;
And, without whom all these might nought avail,
Fear, Hatred, Faith and Tyranny, who spread
Those subtle nets which snare the living and the dead.

XXX

‘His spirit is their power, and they his slaves
In air, and light, and thought, and language dwell;
And keep their state from palaces to graves,
In all resorts of men — invisible,
But when, in ebon mirror, Nightmare fell,
To tyrant or impostor bids them rise,
Black wingèd demon-forms — whom, from the hell,
His reign and dwelling beneath nether skies,
He loosens to their dark and blasting ministries.

XXXI

‘In the world’s youth his empire was as firm
As its foundations. Soon the Spirit of Good,
Though in the likeness of a loathsome worm,
Sprang from the billows of the formless flood,
Which shrank and fled; and with that Fiend of blood
Renewed the doubtful war. Thrones then first shook,
And earth’s immense and trampled multitude
In hope on their own powers began to look,
And Fear, the demon pale, his sanguine shrine forsook.

XXXII

‘Then Greece arose, and to its bards and sages,
In dream, the golden-pinioned Genii came,
Even where they slept amid the night of ages,
Steeping their hearts in the divinest flame

Which thy breath kindled, Power of holiest name!
And oft in cycles since, when darkness gave
New weapons to thy foe, their sunlike fame
Upon the combat shone — a light to save,
Like Paradise spread forth beyond the shadowy grave.

XXXIII

‘Such is this conflict — when mankind doth strive
With its oppressors in a strife of blood,
Or when free thoughts, like lightnings, are alive,
And in each bosom of the multitude
Justice and truth with custom’s hydra brood
Wage silent war; when priests and kings dissemble
In smiles or frowns their fierce disquietude,
When round pure hearts a host of hopes assemble,
The Snake and Eagle meet — the world’s foundations tremble!

XXXIV

‘Thou hast beheld that fight — when to thy home
Thou dost return, steep not its hearth in tears;
Though thou mayst hear that earth is now become
The tyrant’s garbage, which to his compeers,
The vile reward of their dishonored years,
He will dividing give. The victor Fiend
Omnipotent of yore, now quails, and fears
His triumph dearly won, which soon will lend
An impulse swift and sure to his approaching end.

XXXV

‘List, stranger, list! mine is an human form
Like that thou wearest — touch me — shrink not now!
My hand thou feel’st is not a ghost’s, but warm
With human blood. ‘T was many years ago,
Since first my thirsting soul aspired to know
The secrets of this wondrous world, when deep

My heart was pierced with sympathy for woe
Which could not be mine own, and thought did keep
In dream unnatural watch beside an infant's sleep.

XXXVI

'Woe could not be mine own, since far from men
I dwelt, a free and happy orphan child,
By the sea-shore, in a deep mountain glen;
And near the waves and through the forests wild
I roamed, to storm and darkness reconciled;
For I was calm while tempest shook the sky,
But when the breathless heavens in beauty smiled,
I wept sweet tears, yet too tumultuously
For peace, and clasped my hands aloft in ecstasy.

XXXVII

'These were forebodings of my fate. Before
A woman's heart beat in my virgin breast,
It had been nurtured in divinest lore;
A dying poet gave me books, and blessed
With wild but holy talk the sweet unrest
In which I watched him as he died away;
A youth with hoary hair, a fleeting guest
Of our lone mountains; and this lore did sway
My spirit like a storm, contending there alway.

XXXVIII

'Thus the dark tale which history doth unfold
I knew, but not, methinks, as others know,
For they weep not; and Wisdom had unrolled
The clouds which hide the gulf of mortal woe;
To few can she that warning vision show;
For I loved all things with intense devotion,
So that when Hope's deep source in fullest flow,

Like earthquake did uplift the stagnant ocean
Of human thoughts, mine shook beneath the wide emotion.

XXXIX

‘When first the living blood through all these veins
Kindled a thought in sense, great France sprang forth,
And seized, as if to break, the ponderous chains
Which bind in woe the nations of the earth.
I saw, and started from my cottage hearth;
And to the clouds and waves in tameless gladness
Shrieked, till they caught immeasurable mirth,
And laughed in light and music: soon sweet madness
Was poured upon my heart, a soft and thrilling sadness.

XL

‘Deep slumber fell on me: — my dreams were fire,
Soft and delightful thoughts did rest and hover
Like shadows o’er my brain; and strange desire,
The tempest of a passion, raging over
My tranquil soul, its depths with light did cover,
Which passed; and calm, and darkness, sweeter far,
Came — then I loved; but not a human lover!
For when I rose from sleep, the Morning Star
Shone through the woodbine wreaths which round my casement were.

XLI

‘‘T was like an eye which seemed to smile on me.
I watched, till by the sun made pale it sank
Under the billows of the heaving sea;
But from its beams deep love my spirit drank,
And to my brain the boundless world now shrank
Into one thought — one image — yes, forever!
Even like the dayspring, poured on vapors dank,
The beams of that one Star did shoot and quiver
Through my benighted mind — and were extinguished never.

XLII

‘The day passed thus. At night, methought, in dream
A shape of speechless beauty did appear;
It stood like light on a careering stream
Of golden clouds which shook the atmosphere;
A wingèd youth, his radiant brow did wear
The Morning Star; a wild dissolving bliss
Over my frame he breathed, approaching near,
And bent his eyes of kindling tenderness
Near mine, and on my lips impressed a lingering kiss,

XLIII

‘And said: “A Spirit loves thee, mortal maiden;
How wilt thou prove thy worth?” Then joy and sleep
Together fled; my soul was deeply laden,
And to the shore I went to muse and weep;
But as I moved, over my heart did creep
A joy less soft, but more profound and strong
Than my sweet dream; and it forbade to keep
The path of the sea-shore; that Spirit’s tongue
Seemed whispering in my heart, and bore my steps along.

XLIV

‘How, to that vast and peopled city led,
Which was a field of holy warfare then,
I walked among the dying and the dead,
And shared in fearless deeds with evil men,
Calm as an angel in the dragon’s den;
How I braved death for liberty and truth,
And spurned at peace, and power, and fame; and when
Those hopes had lost the glory of their youth,
How sadly I returned — might move the hearer’s ruth.

XLV

‘Warm tears throng fast! the tale may not be said.
Know then that, when this grief had been subdued,
I was not left, like others, cold and dead;

The Spirit whom I loved in solitude
Sustained his child; the tempest-shaken wood,
The waves, the fountains, and the hush of night —
These were his voice, and well I understood
His smile divine, when the calm sea was bright
With silent stars, and Heaven was breathless with delight.

XLVI

‘In lonely glens, amid the roar of rivers,
When the dim nights were moonless, have I known
Joys which no tongue can tell; my pale lip quivers
When thought revisits them: — know thou alone,
That, after many wondrous years were flown,
I was awakened by a shriek of woe;
And over me a mystic robe was thrown
By viewless hands, and a bright Star did glow
Before my steps — the Snake then met his mortal foe.’

XLVII

‘Thou fearest not then the Serpent on thy heart?’
‘Fear it!’ she said, with brief and passionate cry,
And spake no more. That silence made me start —
I looked, and we were sailing pleasantly,
Swift as a cloud between the sea and sky,
Beneath the rising moon seen far away,
Mountains of ice, like sapphire, piled on high,
Hemming the horizon round, in silence lay
On the still waters — these we did approach alway.

XLVIII

And swift and swifter grew the vessel’s motion,
So that a dizzy trance fell on my brain, —
Wild music woke me; we had passed the ocean
Which girds the pole, Nature’s remotest reign;
And we glode fast o’er a pellucid plain
Of waters, azure with the noontide day.
Ethereal mountains shone around; a Fane

Stood in the midst, girt by green isles which lay
On the blue sunny deep, resplendent far away.

XLIX

It was a Temple, such as mortal hand
Has never built, nor ecstasy, nor dream
Reared in the cities of enchanted land;
‘T was likest Heaven, ere yet day’s purple stream
Ebbs o’er the western forest, while the gleam
Of the unrisen moon among the clouds
Is gathering — when with many a golden beam
The thronging constellations rush in crowds,
Paving with fire the sky and the marmoreal floods.

L

Like what may be conceived of this vast dome,
When from the depths which thought can seldom pierce
Genius beholds it rise, his native home,
Girt by the deserts of the Universe;
Yet, nor in painting’s light, or mightier verse,
Or sculpture’s marble language can invest
That shape to mortal sense — such glooms immerse
That incommunicable sight, and rest
Upon the laboring brain and over-burdened breast.

LI

Winding among the lawny islands fair,
Whose blosmy forests starred the shadowy deep,
The wingless boat paused where an ivory stair
Its fretwork in the crystal sea did steep,
Encircling that vast Fane’s aërial heap.
We disembarked, and through a portal wide
We passed, whose roof of moonstone carved did keep
A glimmering o’er the forms on every side,
Sculptures like life and thought, immovable, deep-eyed.

LII

We came to a vast hall, whose glorious roof

Was diamond which had drunk the lightning's sheen
In darkness and now poured it through the woof
Of spell-inwoven clouds hung there to screen
Its blinding splendor — through such veil was seen
That work of subtlest power, divine and rare;
Orb above orb, with starry shapes between,
And hornèd moons, and meteors strange and fair,
On night-black columns poised — one hollow hemisphere!

LIII

Ten thousand columns in that quivering light
Distinct, between whose shafts wound far away
The long and labyrinthine aisles, more bright
With their own radiance than the Heaven of Day;
And on the jasper walls around there lay
Paintings, the poesy of mightiest thought,
Which did the Spirit's history display;
A tale of passionate change, divinely taught,
Which, in their wingèd dance, unconscious Genii wrought.

LIV

Beneath there sate on many a sapphire throne
The Great who had departed from mankind,
A mighty Senate; — some, whose white hair shone
Like mountain snow, mild, beautiful and blind;
Some, female forms, whose gestures beamed with mind;
And ardent youths, and children bright and fair;
And some had lyres whose strings were intertwined
With pale and clinging flames, which ever there
Waked faint yet thrilling sounds that pierced the crystal air.

LV

One seat was vacant in the midst, a throne,
Reared on a pyramid like sculptured flame,
Distinct with circling steps which rested on
Their own deep fire. Soon as the Woman came
Into that hall, she shrieked the Spirit's name

And fell; and vanished slowly from the sight.
Darkness arose from her dissolving frame, —
Which, gathering, filled that dome of woven light,
Blotting its spherèd stars with supernatural night.

LVI

Then first two glittering lights were seen to glide
In circles on the amethystine floor,
Small serpent eyes trailing from side to side,
Like meteors on a river's grassy shore;
They round each other rolled, dilating more
And more — then rose, commingling into one,
One clear and mighty planet hanging o'er
A cloud of deepest shadow which was thrown
Athwart the glowing steps and the crystalline throne.

LVII

The cloud which rested on that cone of flame
Was cloven; beneath the planet sate a Form,
Fairer than tongue can speak or thought may frame,
The radiance of whose limbs rose-like and warm
Flowed forth, and did with softest light inform
The shadowy dome, the sculptures and the state
Of those assembled shapes — with clinging charm
Sinking upon their hearts and mine. He sate
Majestic yet most mild, calm yet compassionate.

LVIII

Wonder and joy a passing faintness threw
Over my brow — a hand supported me,
Whose touch was magic strength; an eye of blue
Looked into mine, like moonlight, soothingly;
And a voice said, 'Thou must a listener be
This day; two mighty Spirits now return,
Like birds of calm, from the world's raging sea;
They pour fresh light from Hope's immortal urn;
A tale of human power — despair not — list and learn!

LIX

I looked, and lo! one stood forth eloquently.
His eyes were dark and deep, and the clear brow
Which shadowed them was like the morning sky,
The cloudless Heaven of Spring, when in their flow
Through the bright air the soft winds as they blow
Wake the green world; his gestures did obey
The oracular mind that made his features glow,
And where his curvèd lips half open lay,
Passion’s divinest stream had made impetuous way.

LX

Beneath the darkness of his outspread hair
He stood thus beautiful; but there was One
Who sate beside him like his shadow there,
And held his hand — far lovelier; she was known
To be thus fair by the few lines alone
Which through her floating locks and gathered cloke,
Glances of soul-dissolving glory, shone;
None else beheld her eyes — in him they woke
Memories which found a tongue, as thus he silence broke.

REVOLT OF ISLAM: Canto Second

I

THE star-light smile of children, the sweet looks
Of women, the fair breast from which I fed,
The murmur of the unreposing brooks,
And the green light which, shifting overhead,
Some tangled bower of vines around me shed,
The shells on the sea-sand, and the wild flowers,
The lamp-light through the rafters cheerly spread
And on the twining flax — in life's young hours
These sights and sounds did nurse my spirit's folded powers.

II

In Argolis, beside the echoing sea,
Such impulses within my mortal frame
Arose, and they were dear to memory,
Like tokens of the dead; but others came
Soon, in another shape — the wondrous fame
Of the past world, the vital words and deeds
Of minds whom neither time nor change can tame,
Traditions dark and old whence evil creeds
Start forth and whose dim shade a stream of poison feeds.

III

I heard, as all have heard, the various story
Of human life, and wept unwilling tears.
Feeble historians of its shame and glory,
False disputants on all its hopes and fears,
Victims who worshipped ruin, chroniclers
Of daily scorn, and slaves who loathed their state,
Yet, flattering Power, had given its ministers
A throne of judgment in the grave—'t was fate,
That among such as these my youth should seek its mate.

IV

The land in which I lived by a fell bane
Was withered up. Tyrants dwelt side by side,
And stabled in our homes, until the chain
Stifled the captive's cry, and to abide
That blasting curse men had no shame. All vied
In evil, slave and despot; fear with lust
Strange fellowship through mutual hate had tied,
Like two dark serpents tangled in the dust,
Which on the paths of men their mingling poison thrust.

V

Earth, our bright home, its mountains and its waters,
And the ethereal shapes which are suspended
Over its green expanse, and those fair daughters,
The clouds, of Sun and Ocean, who have blended
The colors of the air since first extended
It cradled the young world, none wandered forth
To see or feel; a darkness had descended
On every heart; the light which shows its worth
Must among gentle thoughts and fearless take its birth.

VI

This vital world, this home of happy spirits,
Was as a dungeon to my blasted kind;
All that despair from murdered hope inherits
They sought, and, in their helpless misery blind,
A deeper prison and heavier chains did find,
And stronger tyrants: — a dark gulf before,
The realm of a stern Ruler, yawned; behind,
Terror and Time conflicting drove, and bore
On their tempestuous flood the shrieking wretch from shore.

VII

Out of that Ocean's wrecks had Guilt and Woe
Framed a dark dwelling for their homeless thought,
And, starting at the ghosts which to and fro
Glide o'er its dim and gloomy strand, had brought
The worship thence which they each other taught.
Well might men loathe their life! well might they turn
Even to the ills again from which they sought
Such refuge after death! — well might they learn
To gaze on this fair world with hopeless unconcern!

VIII

For they all pined in bondage; body and soul,
Tyrant and slave, victim and torturer, bent
Before one Power, to which supreme control
Over their will by their own weakness lent
Made all its many names omnipotent;
All symbols of things evil, all divine;
And hymns of blood or mockery, which rent
The air from all its fanes, did intertwine
Imposture's impious toils round each discordant shrine.

IX

I heard, as all have heard, life's various story,
And in no careless heart transcribed the tale;
But, from the sneers of men who had grown hoary
In shame and scorn, from groans of crowds made pale
By famine, from a mother's desolate wail
O'er her polluted child, from innocent blood
Poured on the earth, and brows anxious and pale
With the heart's warfare, did I gather food
To feed my many thoughts — a tameless multitude!

X

I wandered through the wrecks of days departed
Far by the desolated shore, when even

O’er the still sea and jagged islets darted
The light of moonrise; in the northern Heaven,
Among the clouds near the horizon driven,
The mountains lay beneath one planet pale;
Around me broken tombs and columns riven
Looked vast in twilight, and the sorrowing gale
Waked in those ruins gray its everlasting wail!

XI

I knew not who had framed these wonders then,
Nor had I heard the story of their deeds;
But dwellings of a race of mightier men,
And monuments of less ungentle creeds,
Tell their own tale to him who wisely heeds
The language which they speak; and now, to me,
The moonlight making pale the blooming weeds,
The bright stars shining in the breathless sea,
Interpreted those scrolls of mortal mystery.

XII

Such man has been, and such may yet become!
Ay, wiser, greater, gentler even than they
Who on the fragments of yon shattered dome
Have stamped the sign of power! I felt the sway
Of the vast stream of ages bear away
My floating thoughts — my heart beat loud and fast —
Even as a storm let loose beneath the ray
Of the still moon, my spirit onward passed
Beneath truth’s steady beams upon its tumult cast.

XIII

It shall be thus no more! too long, too long,
Sons of the glorious dead, have ye lain bound
In darkness and in ruin! Hope is strong,
Justice and Truth their wingèd child have found!

Awake! arise! until the mighty sound
Of your career shall scatter in its gust
The thrones of the oppressor, and the ground
Hide the last altar's unregarded dust,
Whose Idol has so long betrayed your impious trust.

XIV

It must be so — I will arise and waken
The multitude, and like a sulphurous hill,
Which on a sudden from its snows has shaken
The swoon of ages, it shall burst, and fill
The world with cleansing fire; it must, it will —
It may not be restrained! — and who shall stand
Amid the rocking earthquake steadfast still
But Laon? on high Freedom's desert land
A tower whose marble walls the leaguèd storms withstand!

XV

One summer night, in commune with the hope
Thus deeply fed, amid those ruins gray
I watched beneath the dark sky's starry cope;
And ever from that hour upon me lay
The burden of this hope, and night or day,
In vision or in dream, clove to my breast;
Among mankind, or when gone far away
To the lone shores and mountains, 't was a guest
Which followed where I fled, and watched when I did rest.

XVI

These hopes found words through which my spirit sought
To weave a bondage of such sympathy
As might create some response to the thought
Which ruled me now — and as the vapors lie
Bright in the outspread morning's radiancy,
So were these thoughts invested with the light

Of language; and all bosoms made reply
On which its lustre streamed, whene'er it might
Through darkness wide and deep those trancèd spirits smite.

XVII

Yes, many an eye with dizzy tears was dim,
And oft I thought to clasp my own heart's brother,
When I could feel the listener's senses swim,
And hear his breath its own swift gaspings smother
Even as my words evoked them — and another,
And yet another, I did fondly deem,
Felt that we all were sons of one great mother;
And the cold truth such sad reverse did seem
As to awake in grief from some delightful dream.

XVIII

Yes, oft beside the ruined labyrinth
Which skirts the hoary caves of the green deep
Did Laon and his friend on one gray plinth,
Round whose worn base the wild waves hiss and leap,
Resting at eve, a lofty converse keep;
And that this friend was false may now be said
Calmly — that he like other men could weep
Tears which are lies, and could betray and spread
Snares for that guileless heart which for his own had bled.

XIX

Then, had no great aim recompensed my sorrow,
I must have sought dark respite from its stress
In dreamless rest, in sleep that sees no morrow —
For to tread life's dismaying wilderness
Without one smile to cheer, one voice to bless,
Amid the snares and scoffs of humankind,
Is hard — but I betrayed it not, nor less

With love that scorned return sought to unbind
The interwoven clouds which make its wisdom blind.

XX

With deathless minds, which leave where they have passed
A path of light, my soul communion knew,
Till from that glorious intercourse, at last,
As from a mine of magic store, I drew
Words which were weapons; round my heart there grew
The adamantine armor of their power;
And from my fancy wings of golden hue
Sprang forth — yet not alone from wisdom's tower,
A minister of truth, these plumes young Laon bore.

XXI

An orphan with my parents lived, whose eyes
Were lodestars of delight, which drew me home
When I might wander forth; nor did I prize
Aught human thing beneath Heaven's mighty dome
Beyond this child; so when sad hours were come,
And baffled hope like ice still clung to me,
Since kin were cold, and friends had now become
Heartless and false, I turned from all to be,
Cythna, the only source of tears and smiles to thee.

XXII

What wert thou then? A child most infantine,
Yet wandering far beyond that innocent age
In all but its sweet looks and mien divine;
Even then, methought, with the world's tyrant rage
A patient warfare thy young heart did wage,
When those soft eyes of scarcely conscious thought
Some tale or thine own fancies would engage
To overflow with tears, or converse fraught
With passion o'er their depths its fleeting light had wrought.

XXIII

She moved upon this earth a shape of brightness,
A power, that from its objects scarcely drew
One impulse of her being — in her lightness
Most like some radiant cloud of morning dew
Which wanders through the waste air's pathless blue
To nourish some far desert; she did seem
Beside me, gathering beauty as she grew,
Like the bright shade of some immortal dream
Which walks, when tempest sleeps, the wave of life's dark stream.

XXIV

As mine own shadow was this child to me,
A second self, far dearer and more fair,
Which clothed in undissolving radiancy
All those steep paths which languor and despair
Of human things had made so dark and bare,
But which I trod alone — nor, till bereft
Of friends, and overcome by lonely care,
Knew I what solace for that loss was left,
Though by a bitter wound my trusting heart was cleft.

XXV

Once she was dear, now she was all I had
To love in human life — this playmate sweet,
This child of twelve years old. So she was made
My sole associate, and her willing feet
Wandered with mine where Earth and Ocean meet,
Beyond the aërial mountains whose vast cells
The unreposing billows ever beat,
Through forests wild and old, and lawny dells
Where boughs of incense droop over the emerald wells.

XXVI

And warm and light I felt her clasping hand
When twined in mine; she followed where I went,
Through the lone paths of our immortal land.
It had no waste but some memorial lent
Which strung me to my toil — some monument
Vital with mind; then Cythna by my side,
Until the bright and beaming day were spent,
Would rest, with looks entreating to abide,
Too earnest and too sweet ever to be denied.

XXVII

And soon I could not have refused her. Thus
Forever, day and night, we two were ne'er
Parted but when brief sleep divided us;
And, when the pauses of the lulling air
Of noon beside the sea had made a lair
For her soothed senses, in my arm she slept,
And I kept watch over her slumbers there,
While, as the shifting visions over her swept,
Amid her innocent rest by turns she smiled and wept.

XXVIII

And in the murmur of her dreams was heard
Sometimes the name of Laon. Suddenly
She would arise, and, like the secret bird
Whom sunset wakens, fill the shore and sky
With her sweet accents, a wild melody, —
Hymns which my soul had woven to Freedom, strong
The source of passion whence they rose to be;
Triumphant strains which, like a spirit's tongue,
To the enchanted waves that child of glory sung —

XXIX

Her white arms lifted through the shadowy stream
Of her loose hair. Oh, excellently great

Seemed to me then my purpose, the vast theme
Of those impassioned songs, when Cythna sate
Amid the calm which rapture doth create
After its tumult, her heart vibrating,
Her spirit o'er the Ocean's floating state
From her deep eyes far wandering, on the wing
Of visions that were mine, beyond its utmost spring!

XXX

For, before Cythna loved it, had my song
Peopled with thoughts the boundless universe,
A mighty congregation, which were strong,
Where'er they trod the darkness, to disperse
The cloud of that unutterable curse
Which clings upon mankind; all things became
Slaves to my holy and heroic verse,
Earth, sea and sky, the planets, life and fame
And fate, or whate'er else binds the world's wondrous frame.

XXXI

And this belovèd child thus felt the sway
Of my conceptions, gathering like a cloud
The very wind on which it rolls away;
Hers too were all my thoughts, ere yet endowed
With music and with light their fountains flowed
In poesy; and her still and earnest face,
Pallid with feelings which intensely glowed
Within, was turned on mine with speechless grace,
Watching the hopes which there her heart had learned to trace.

XXXII

In me, communion with this purest being
Kindled intenser zeal, and made me wise
In knowledge, which in hers mine own mind seeing
Left in the human world few mysteries.

How without fear of evil or disguise
Was Cythna! what a spirit strong and mild,
Which death or pain or peril could despise,
Yet melt in tenderness! what genius wild,
Yet mighty, was enclosed within one simple child!

XXXIII

New lore was this. Old age with its gray hair,
And wrinkled legends of unworthy things,
And icy sneers, is nought: it cannot dare
To burst the chains which life forever flings
On the entangled soul's aspiring wings;
So is it cold and cruel, and is made
The careless slave of that dark Power which brings
Evil, like blight, on man, who, still betrayed,
Laughs o'er the grave in which his living hopes are laid.

XXXIV

Nor are the strong and the severe to keep
The empire of the world. Thus Cythna taught
Even in the visions of her eloquent sleep,
Unconscious of the power through which she wrought
The woof of such intelligible thought,
As from the tranquil strength which cradled lay
In her smile-peopled rest my spirit sought
Why the deceiver and the slave has sway
O'er heralds so divine of truth's arising day.

XXXV

Within that fairest form the female mind,
Untainted by the poison clouds which rest
On the dark world, a sacred home did find;
But else from the wide earth's maternal breast
Victorious Evil, which had dispossessed
All native power, had those fair children torn,
And made them slaves to soothe his vile unrest,

And minister to lust its joys forlorn,
Till they had learned to breathe the atmosphere of scorn.

XXXVI

This misery was but coldly felt, till she
Became my only friend, who had endued
My purpose with a wider sympathy.
Thus Cythna mourned with me the servitude
In which the half of humankind were mewed,
Victims of lust and hate, the slaves of slaves;
She mourned that grace and power were thrown as food
To the hyena Lust, who, among graves,
Over his loathèd meal, laughing in agony, raves.

XXXVII

And I, still gazing on that glorious child,
Even as these thoughts flushed o'er her:—'Cythna sweet,
Well with the world art thou unreconciled;
Never will peace and human nature meet
Till free and equal man and woman greet
Domestic peace; and ere this power can make
In human hearts its calm and holy seat,
This slavery must be broken' — as I spake,
From Cythna's eyes a light of exultation brake.

XXXVIII

She replied earnestly:—'It shall be mine,
This task, — mine, Laon! thou hast much to gain;
Nor wilt thou at poor Cythna's pride repine,
If she should lead a happy female train
To meet thee over the rejoicing plain,
When myriads at thy call shall throng around
The Golden City.' — Then the child did strain
My arm upon her tremulous heart, and wound
Her own about my neck, till some reply she found.

XXXIX

I smiled, and spake not.—'Wherefore dost thou smile
At what I say? Laon, I am not weak,
And, though my cheek might become pale the while,
With thee, if thou desirest, will I seek
Through their array of banded slaves to wreak
Ruin upon the tyrants. I had thought
It was more hard to turn my unpractised cheek
To scorn and shame, and this belovèd spot
And thee, O dearest friend, to leave and murmur not.

XL

'Whence came I what I am? Thou, Laon, knowest
How a young child should thus undaunted be;
Methinks it is a power which thou bestowest,
Through which I seek, by most resembling thee,
So to become most good, and great, and free;
Yet, far beyond this Ocean's utmost roar,
In towers and huts are many like to me,
Who, could they see thine eyes, or feel such lore
As I have learnt from them, like me would fear no more.

XLI

'Think'st thou that I shall speak unskilfully,
And none will heed me? I remember now
How once a slave in tortures doomed to die
Was saved because in accents sweet and low
He sung a song his judge loved long ago,
As he was led to death. All shall relent
Who hear me; tears as mine have flowed, shall flow,
Hearts beat as mine now beats, with such intent
As renovates the world; a will omnipotent!

XLII

'Yes, I will tread Pride's golden palaces,
Through Penury's roofless huts and squalid cells
Will I descend, where'er in abjectness

Woman with some vile slave her tyrant dwells;
There with the music of thine own sweet spells
Will disenchant the captives, and will pour
For the despairing, from the crystal wells
Of thy deep spirit, reason's mighty lore,
And power shall then abound, and hope arise once more.

XLIII

'Can man be free if woman be a slave?
Chain one who lives, and breathes this boundless air,
To the corruption of a closèd grave!
Can they, whose mates are beasts condemned to bear
Scorn heavier far than toil or anguish, dare
To trample their oppressors? In their home,
Among their babes, thou knowest a curse would wear
The shape of woman — hoary Crime would come
Behind, and Fraud rebuild Religion's tottering dome.

XLIV

'I am a child: — I would not yet depart.
When I go forth alone, bearing the lamp
Aloft which thou hast kindled in my heart,
Millions of slaves from many a dungeon damp
Shall leap in joy, as the benumbing cramp
Of ages leaves their limbs. No ill may harm
Thy Cythna ever. Truth its radiant stamp
Has fixed, as an invulnerable charm,
Upon her children's brow, dark Falsehood to disarm.

XLV

'Wait yet awhile for the appointed day.
Thou wilt depart, and I with tears shall stand
Watching thy dim sail skirt the ocean gray;
Amid the dwellers of this lonely land
I shall remain alone — and thy command
Shall then dissolve the world's unquiet trance,
And, multitudinous as the desert sand

Borne on the storm, its millions shall advance,
Thronging round thee, the light of their deliverance.

XLVI

‘Then, like the forests of some pathless mountain
Which from remotest glens two warring winds
Involve in fire which not the loosened fountain
Of broadest floods might quench, shall all the kinds
Of evil catch from our uniting minds
The spark which must consume them; — Cythna then
Will have cast off the impotence that binds
Her childhood now, and through the paths of men
Will pass, as the charmed bird that haunts the serpent’s den.

XLVII

‘We part! — O Laon, I must dare, nor tremble,
To meet those looks no more! — Oh, heavy stroke!
Sweet brother of my soul! can I dissemble
The agony of this thought?’ — As thus she spoke
The gathered sobs her quivering accents broke,
And in my arms she hid her beating breast.
I remained still for tears — sudden she woke
As one awakes from sleep, and wildly pressed
My bosom, her whole frame impetuously possessed.

XLVIII

‘We part to meet again — but yon blue waste,
Yon desert wide and deep, holds no recess
Within whose happy silence, thus embraced,
We might survive all ills in one caress;
Nor doth the grave — I fear ‘t is passionless —
Nor yon cold vacant Heaven: — we meet again
Within the minds of men, whose lips shall bless
Our memory, and whose hopes its light retain
When these dissevered bones are trodden in the plain.’

XLIX

I could not speak, though she had ceased, for now

The fountains of her feeling, swift and deep,
Seemed to suspend the tumult of their flow.
So we arose, and by the star-light steep
Went homeward — neither did we speak nor weep,
But, pale, were calm with passion. Thus subdued,
Like evening shades that o’er the mountains creep,
We moved towards our home; where, in this mood,
Each from the other sought refuge in solitude.

REVOLT OF ISLAM: Canto Third

I

WHAT thoughts had sway o'er Cythna's lonely slumber
That night, I know not; but my own did seem
As if they might ten thousand years outnumber
Of waking life, the visions of a dream
Which hid in one dim gulf the troubled stream
Of mind; a boundless chaos wild and vast,
Whose limits yet were never memory's theme;
And I lay struggling as its whirlwinds passed,
Sometimes for rapture sick, sometimes for pain aghast.

II

Two hours, whose mighty circle did embrace
More time than might make gray the infant world,
Rolled thus, a weary and tumultuous space;
When the third came, like mist on breezes curled,
From my dim sleep a shadow was unfurled;
Methought, upon the threshold of a cave
I sate with Cythna; drooping briony, pearled
With dew from the wild streamlet's shattered wave,
Hung, where we sate to taste the joys which Nature gave.

III

We lived a day as we were wont to live,
But Nature had a robe of glory on,
And the bright air o'er every shape did weave
Intenser hues, so that the herbless stone,
The leafless bough among the leaves alone,
Had being clearer than its own could be;
And Cythna's pure and radiant self was shown,
In this strange vision, so divine to me,
That if I loved before, now love was agony.

IV

Morn fled, noon came, evening, then night, descended,
And we prolonged calm talk beneath the sphere
Of the calm moon — when suddenly was blended
With our repose a nameless sense of fear;
And from the cave behind I seemed to hear
Sounds gathering upwards — accents incomplete,
And stifled shrieks, — and now, more near and near,
A tumult and a rush of thronging feet
The cavern's secret depths beneath the earth did beat.

V

The scene was changed, and away, away, away!
Through the air and over the sea we sped,
And Cythna in my sheltering bosom lay,
And the winds bore me; through the darkness spread
Around, the gaping earth then vomited
Legions of foul and ghastly shapes, which hung
Upon my flight; and ever as we fled
They plucked at Cythna; soon to me then clung
A sense of actual things those monstrous dreams among.

VI

And I lay struggling in the impotence
Of sleep, while outward life had burst its bound,
Though, still deluded, strove the tortured sense
To its dire wanderings to adapt the sound
Which in the light of morn was poured around
Our dwelling; breathless, pale and unaware
I rose, and all the cottage crowded found
With armèd men, whose glittering swords were bare,
And whose degraded limbs the Tyrant's garb did wear.

VII

And ere with rapid lips and gathered brow
I could demand the cause, a feeble shriek —
It was a feeble shriek, faint, far and low —
Arrested me; my mien grew calm and meek,
And grasping a small knife I went to seek
That voice among the crowd—'t was Cythna's cry!
Beneath most calm resolve did agony wreak
Its whirlwind rage: — so I passed quietly
Till I beheld where bound that dearest child did lie.

VIII

I started to behold her, for delight
And exultation, and a joyance free,
Solemn, serene and lofty, filled the light
Of the calm smile with which she looked on me;
So that I feared some brainless ecstasy,
Wrought from that bitter woe, had wildered her.
'Farewell! farewell!' she said, as I drew nigh;
'At first my peace was marred by this strange stir,
Now I am calm as truth — its chosen minister.

IX

'Look not so, Laon — say farewell in hope;
These bloody men are but the slaves who bear
Their mistress to her task; it was my scope
The slavery where they drag me now to share,
And among captives willing chains to wear
Awhile — the rest thou knowest. Return, dear friend!
Let our first triumph trample the despair
Which would ensnare us now, for, in the end,
In victory or in death our hopes and fears must blend.'

X

These words had fallen on my unheeding ear,
Whilst I had watched the motions of the crew

With seeming careless glance; not many were
Around her, for their comrades just withdrew
To guard some other victim; so I drew
My knife, and with one impulse, suddenly,
All unaware three of their number slew,
And grasped a fourth by the throat, and with loud cry
My countrymen invoked to death or liberty.

XI

What followed then I know not, for a stroke,
On my raised arm and naked head came down,
Filling my eyes with blood. — When I awoke,
I felt that they had bound me in my swoon,
And up a rock which overhangs the town
By the steep path were bearing me; below
The plain was filled with slaughter, — overthrown
The vineyards and the harvests, and the glow
Of blazing roofs shone far o'er the white Ocean's flow.

XII

Upon that rock a mighty column stood,
Whose capital seemed sculptured in the sky,
Which to the wanderers o'er the solitude
Of distant seas, from ages long gone by,
Had made a landmark; o'er its height to fly
Scarcely the cloud, the vulture or the blast
Has power, and when the shades of evening lie
On Earth and Ocean, its carved summits cast
The sunken daylight far through the aërial waste.

XIII

They bore me to a cavern in the hill
Beneath that column, and unbound me there;
And one did strip me stark; and one did fill
A vessel from the putrid pool; one bare

A lighted torch, and four with friendless care
Guided my steps the cavern-paths along;
Then up a steep and dark and narrow stair
We wound, until the torch's fiery tongue
Amid the gushing day beamless and pallid hung.

XIV

They raised me to the platform of the pile,
That column's dizzy height; the grate of brass,
Through which they thrust me, open stood the while,
As to its ponderous and suspended mass,
With chains which eat into the flesh, alas!
With brazen links, my naked limbs they bound;
The grate, as they departed to repass,
With horrid clangor fell, and the far sound
Of their retiring steps in the dense gloom was drowned.

XV

The noon was calm and bright: — around that column
The overhanging sky and circling sea,
Spread forth in silentness profound and solemn,
The darkness of brief frenzy cast on me,
So that I knew not my own misery;
The islands and the mountains in the day
Like clouds reposed afar; and I could see
The town among the woods below that lay,
And the dark rocks which bound the bright and glassy bay.

XVI

It was so calm, that scarce the feathery weed
Sown by some eagle on the topmost stone
Swayed in the air: — so bright, that noon did breed
No shadow in the sky beside mine own —
Mine, and the shadow of my chain alone.
Below, the smoke of roofs involved in flame

Rested like night; all else was clearly shown
In that broad glare; yet sound to me none came,
But of the living blood that ran within my frame.

XVII

The peace of madness fled, and ah, too soon!
A ship was lying on the sunny main;
Its sails were flagging in the breathless noon;
Its shadow lay beyond. That sight again
Waked with its presence in my trancèd brain
The stings of a known sorrow, keen and cold;
I knew that ship bore Cythna o'er the plain
Of waters, to her blighting slavery sold,
And watched it with such thoughts as must remain untold.

XVIII

I watched until the shades of evening wrapped
Earth like an exhalation; then the bark
Moved, for that calm was by the sunset snapped.
It moved a speck upon the Ocean dark;
Soon the wan stars came forth, and I could mark
Its path no more! I sought to close mine eyes,
But, like the balls, their lids were stiff and stark;
I would have risen, but ere that I could rise
My parchèd skin was split with piercing agonies.

XIX

I gnawed my brazen chain, and sought to sever
Its adamantine links, that I might die.
O Liberty! forgive the base endeavor,
Forgive me, if, reserved for victory,
The Champion of thy faith e'er sought to fly!
That starry night, with its clear silence, sent
Tameless resolve which laughed at misery

Into my soul — linkèd remembrance lent
To that such power, to me such a severe content.

XX

To breathe, to be, to hope, or to despair
And die, I questioned not; nor, though the Sun,
Its shafts of agony kindling through the air,
Moved over me, nor though in evening dun,
Or when the stars their visible courses run,
Or morning, the wide universe was spread
In dreary calmness round me, did I shun
Its presence, nor seek refuge with the dead
From one faint hope whose flower a dropping poison shed.

XXI

Two days thus passed — I neither raved nor died;
Thirst raged within me, like a scorpion's nest
Built in mine entrails; I had spurned aside
The water-vessel, while despair possessed
My thoughts, and now no drop remained. The uprest
Of the third sun brought hunger — but the crust
Which had been left was to my craving breast
Fuel, not food. I chewed the bitter dust,
And bit my bloodless arm, and licked the brazen rust.

XXII

My brain began to fail when the fourth morn
Burst o'er the golden isles. A fearful sleep,
Which through the caverns dreary and forlorn
Of the riven soul sent its foul dreams to sweep
With whirlwind swiftness — a fall far and deep —
A gulf, a void, a sense of senselessness —
These things dwelt in me, even as shadows keep
Their watch in some dim charnel's loneliness, —
A shoreless sea, a sky sunless and planetless!

XXIII

The forms which peopled this terrific trance
I well remember. Like a choir of devils,
Around me they involved a giddy dance;
Legions seemed gathering from the misty levels
Of Ocean, to supply those ceaseless revels, —
Foul, ceaseless shadows; thought could not divide
The actual world from these entangling evils,
Which so bemocked themselves that I descried
All shapes like mine own self hideously multiplied.

XXIV

The sense of day and night, of false and true,
Was dead within me. Yet two visions burst
That darkness; one, as since that hour I knew,
Was not a phantom of the realms accursed,
Where then my spirit dwelt — but of the first
I know not yet, was it a dream or no;
But both, though not distincter, were immersed
In hues which, when through memory's waste they flow,
Make their divided streams more bright and rapid now.

XXV

Methought that grate was lifted, and the seven,
Who brought me thither, four stiff corpses bare,
And from the frieze to the four winds of Heaven
Hung them on high by the entangled hair;
Swarthy were three — the fourth was very fair;
As they retired, the golden moon upsprung,
And eagerly, out in the giddy air,
Leaning that I might eat, I stretched and clung
Over the shapeless depth in which those corpses hung.

XXVI

A woman's shape, now lank and cold and blue,
The dwelling of the many-colored worm,
Hung there; the white and hollow cheek I drew
To my dry lips — What radiance did inform
Those horny eyes? whose was that withered form?
Alas, alas! it seemed that Cythna's ghost
Laughed in those looks, and that the flesh was warm
Within my teeth! — a whirlwind keen as frost
Then in its sinking gulfs my sickening spirit tossed.

XXVII

Then seemed it that a tameless hurricane
Arose, and bore me in its dark career
Beyond the sun, beyond the stars that wane
On the verge of formless pace — it languished there,
And, dying, left a silence lone and drear,
More horrible than famine. In the deep
The shape of an old man did then appear,
Stately and beautiful; that dreadful sleep
His heavenly smiles dispersed, and I could wake and weep.

XXVIII

And, when the blinding tears had fallen, I saw
That column, and those corpses, and the moon,
And felt the poisonous tooth of hunger gnaw
My vitals; I rejoiced, as if the boon
Of senseless death would be accorded soon,
When from that stony gloom a voice arose,
Solemn and sweet as when low winds attune
The midnight pines; the grate did then unclose,
And on that reverend form the moonlight did repose.

XXIX

He struck my chains, and gently spake and smiled;
As they were loosened by that Hermit old,

Mine eye were of their madness half beguiled
To answer those kind looks; he did enfold
His giant arms around me to uphold
My wretched frame; my scorchèd limbs he wound
In linen moist and balmy, and as cold
As dew to drooping leaves; the chain, with sound
Like earthquake, through the chasm of that steep stair did bound,

XXX

As, lifting me, it fell! — What next I heard
Were billow leaping on the harbor bar,
And the shrill sea-wind whose breath idly stirred
My hair; I looked abroad, and saw a star
Shining beside a sail, and distant far
That mountain and its column, the known mark
Of those who in the wide deep wandering are, —
So that I feared some Spirit, fell and dark,
In trance had lain me thus within a fiendish bark.

XXXI

For now, indeed, over the salt sea billow
I sailed; yet dared not look upon the shape
Of him who ruled the helm, although the pillow
For my light head was hollowed in his lap,
And my bare limbs his mantle did enwrap, —
Fearing it was a fiend; at last, he bent
O'er me his aged face; as if to snap
Those dreadful thoughts, the gentle grandsire bent,
And to my inmost soul his soothing looks he sent.

XXXII

A soft and healing potion to my lips
At intervals he raised — now looked on high
To mark if yet the starry giant dips
His zone in the dim sea — now cheeringly,

Though he said little, did he speak to me.
It is a friend beside thee — take good cheer
‘Poor victim, thou art now at liberty!’
I joyed as those a human tone to hear
Who in cells deep and lone have languished many a year.

XXXIII

A dim and feeble joy, whose glimpses oft
Were quenched in a relapse of wildering dreams;
Yet still methought we sailed, until aloft
The stars of night grew pallid, and the beams
Of morn descended on the ocean-streams;
And still that aged man, so grand and mild,
Tended me, even as some sick mother seems
To hang in hope over a dying child,
Till in the azure East darkness again was piled.

XXXIV

And then the night-wind, steaming from the shore,
Sent odors dying sweet across the sea,
And the swift boat the little waves which bore,
Were cut by its keen keel, though slantingly;
Soon I could hear the leaves sigh, and could see
The myrtle-blossoms starring the dim grove,
As past the pebbly beach the boat did flee
On sidelong wing into a silent cove
Where ebon pines a shade under the starlight wove.

REVOLT OF ISLAM: Canto Fourth

I

THE old man took the oars, and soon the bark
Smote on the beach beside a tower of stone.
It was a crumbling heap whose portal dark
With blooming ivy-trails was overgrown;
Upon whose floor the spangling sands were strown,
And rarest sea-shells, which the eternal flood,
Slave to the mother of the months, had thrown
Within the walls of that gray tower, which stood
A changeling of man's art nursed amid Nature's brood.

II

When the old man his boat had anchorèd,
He wound me in his arms with tender care,
And very few but kindly words he said,
And bore me through the tower adown a stair,
Whose smooth descent some ceaseless step to wear
For many a year had fallen. We came at last
To a small chamber which with mosses rare
Was tapestried, where me his soft hands placed
Upon a couch of grass and oak-leaves interlaced.

III

The moon was darting through the lattices
Its yellow light, warm as the beams of day —
So warm that to admit the dewy breeze
The old man opened them; the moonlight lay
Upon a lake whose waters wove their play
Even to the threshold of that lonely home;
Within was seen in the dim wavering ray
The antique sculptured roof, and many a tome
Whose lore had made that sage all that he had become.

IV

The rock-built barrier of the sea was passed
And I was on the margin of a lake,
A lonely lake, amid the forests vast
And snowy mountains. Did my spirit wake
From sleep as many-colored as the snake
That girds eternity? in life and truth
Might not my heart its cravings ever slake?
Was Cythna then a dream, and all my youth,
And all its hopes and fears, and all its joy and ruth?

V

Thus madness came again, — a milder madness,
Which darkened nought but time's unquiet flow
With supernatural shades of clinging sadness;
That gentle Hermit, in my helpless woe,
By my sick couch was busy to and fro,
Like a strong spirit ministrant of good;
When I was healed, he led me forth to show
The wonders of his sylvan solitude,
And we together sate by that isle-fretted flood.

VI

He knew his soothing words to weave with skill
From all my madness told; like mine own heart,
Of Cythna would he question me, until
That thrilling name had ceased to make me start,
From his familiar lips; it was not art,
Of wisdom and of justice when he spoke —
When 'mid soft looks of pity, there would dart
A glance as keen as is the lightning's stroke
When it doth rive the knots of some ancestral oak.

VII

Thus slowly from my brain the darkness rolled;
My thoughts their due array did reassume
Through the enchantments of that Hermit old.
Then I bethought me of the glorious doom
Of those who sternly struggle to relume
The lamp of Hope o'er man's bewildered lot;
And, sitting by the waters, in the gloom
Of eve, to that friend's heart I told my thought —
That heart which had grown old, but had corrupted not.

VIII

That hoary man had spent his livelong age
In converse with the dead who leave the stamp
Of ever-burning thoughts on many a page,
When they are gone into the senseless damp
Of graves; his spirit thus became a lamp
Of splendor, like to those on which it fed;
Through peopled haunts, the City and the Camp,
Deep thirst for knowledge had his footsteps led,
And all the ways of men among mankind he read.

IX

But custom maketh blind and obdurate
The loftiest hearts; he had beheld the woe
In which mankind was bound, but deemed that fate
Which made them abject would preserve them so;
And in such faith, some steadfast joy to know,
He sought this cell; but when fame went abroad
That one in Argolis did undergo
Torture for liberty, and that the crowd
High truths from gifted lips had heard and understood,

X

And that the multitude was gathering wide, —
His spirit leaped within his aged frame;

In lonely peace he could no more abide,
But to the land on which the victor's flame
Had fed, my native land, the Hermit came;
Each heart was there a shield, and every tongue
Was as a sword of truth — young Laon's name
Rallied their secret hopes, though tyrants sung
Hymns of triumphant joy our scattered tribes among.

XI

He came to the lone column on the rock,
And with his sweet and mighty eloquence
The hearts of those who watched it did unlock,
And made them melt in tears of penitence.
They gave him entrance free to bear me thence.
'Since this,' the old man said, 'seven years are spent,
While slowly truth on thy benighted sense
Has crept; the hope which wildered it has lent,
Meanwhile, to me the power of a sublime intent.

XII

'Yes, from the records of my youthful state,
And from the lore of bards and sages old,
From whatsoe'er my wakened thoughts create
Out of the hopes of thine aspirings bold,
Have I collected language to unfold
Truth to my countrymen; from shore to shore
Doctrines of human power my words have told;
They have been heard, and men aspire to more
Than they have ever gained or ever lost of yore.

XIII

'In secret chambers parents read, and weep,
My writings to their babes, no longer blind;
And young men gather when their tyrants sleep,
And vows of faith each to the other bind;

And marriageable maidens, who have pined
With love till life seemed melting through their look,
A warmer zeal, a nobler hope, now find;
And every bosom thus is rapt and shook,
Like autumn's myriad leaves in one swoln mountain brook.

XIV

'The tyrants of the Golden City tremble
At voices which are heard about the streets;
The ministers of fraud can scarce dissemble
The lies of their own heart, but when one meets
Another at the shrine, he inly weets,
Though he says nothing, that the truth is known;
Murderers are pale upon the judgment-seats,
And gold grows vile even to the wealthy crone,
And laughter fills the Fane, and curses shake the Throne.

XV

'Kind thoughts, and mighty hopes, and gentle deeds
Abound; for fearless love, and the pure law
Of mild equality and peace, succeeds
To faiths which long have held the world in awe,
Bloody, and false, and cold. As whirlpools draw
All wrecks of Ocean to their chasm, the sway
Of thy strong genius, Laon, which foresaw
This hope, compels all spirits to obey,
Which round thy secret strength now throng in wide array.

XVI

'For I have been thy passive instrument' —
(As thus the old man spake, his countenance
Gleamed on me like a spirit's)—'thou hast lent
To me, to all, the power to advance
Towards this unforeseen deliverance
From our ancestral chains — ay, thou didst rear

That lamp of hope on high, which time nor chance
Nor change may not extinguish, and my share
Of good was o’er the world its gathered beams to bear.

XVII

‘But I, alas! am both unknown and old,
And though the woof of wisdom I know well
To dye in hues of language, I am cold
In seeming, and the hopes which inly dwell
My manners note that I did long repel;
But Laon’s name to the tumultuous throng
Were like the star whose beams the waves compel
And tempests, and his soul-subduing tongue
Were as a lance to quell the mailèd crest of wrong.

XVIII

‘Perchance blood need not flow; if thou at length
Wouldst rise, perchance the very slaves would spare
Their brethren and themselves; great is the strength
Of words — for lately did a maiden fair,
Who from her childhood has been taught to bear
The Tyrant’s heaviest yoke, arise, and make
Her sex the law of truth and freedom hear,
And with these quiet words—”for thine own sake
I prithee spare me,” — did with ruth so take

XIX

‘All hearts that even the torturer, who had bound
Her meek calm frame, ere it was yet impaled,
Loosened her weeping then; nor could be found
One human hand to harm her. Unassailed
Therefore she walks through the great City, veiled
In virtue’s adamantine eloquence,
‘Gainst scorn and death and pain thus trebly mailed,

And blending in the smiles of that defence
The serpent and the dove, wisdom and innocence.

XX

‘The wild-eyed women throng around her path;
From their luxurious dungeons, from the dust
Of meaner thralls, from the oppressor’s wrath,
Or the caresses of his sated lust,
They congregate; in her they put their trust.
The tyrants send their armèd slaves to quell
Her power; they, even like a thunder-gust
Caught by some forest, bend beneath the spell
Of that young maiden’s speech, and to their chiefs rebel.

XXI

‘Thus she doth equal laws and justice teach
To woman, outraged and polluted long;
Gathering the sweetest fruit in human reach
For those fair hands now free, while armèd wrong
Trembles before her look, though it be strong;
Thousands thus dwell beside her, virgins bright
And matrons with their babes, a stately throng!
Lovers renew the vows which they did plight
In early faith, and hearts long parted now unite;

XXII

‘And homeless orphans find a home near her,
And those poor victims of the proud, no less,
Fair wrecks, on whom the smiling world with stir
Thrusts the redemption of its wickedness.
In squalid huts, and in its palaces,
Sits Lust alone, while o’er the land is borne
Her voice, whose awful sweetness doth repress
All evil; and her foes relenting turn,
And cast the vote of love in hope’s abandoned urn.

XXIII

‘So in the populous City, a young maiden
Has baffled Havoc of the prey which he
Marks as his own, whene’er with chains o’erladen
Men make them arms to hurl down tyranny, —
False arbiter between the bound and free;
And o’er the land, in hamlets and in towns
The multitudes collect tumultuously,
And throng in arms; but tyranny disowns
Their claim, and gathers strength around its trembling thrones.

XXIV

‘Blood soon, although unwillingly, to shed
The free cannot forbear. The Queen of Slaves,
The hood-winked Angel of the blind and dead,
Custom, with iron mace points to the graves
Where her own standard desolately waves
Over the dust of Prophets and of Kings.
Many yet stand in her array—”she paves
Her path with human hearts,” and o’er it flings
The wildering gloom of her immeasurable wings.

XXV

‘There is a plain beneath the City’s wall,
Bounded by misty mountains, wide and vast;
Millions there lift at Freedom’s thrilling call
Ten thousand standards wide; they load the blast
Which bears one sound of many voices past,
And startles on his throne their sceptred foe;
He sits amid his idle pomp aghast,
And that his power hath passed away, doth know —
Why pause the victor swords to seal his overthrow?

XXVI

‘The Tyrant’s guards resistance yet maintain,
Fearless, and fierce, and hard as beasts of blood;
They stand a speck amid the peopled plain;
Carnage and ruin have been made their food
From infancy; ill has become their good,
And for its hateful sake their will has wove
The chains which eat their hearts. The multitude,
Surrounding them, with words of human love
Seek from their own decay their stubborn minds to move.

XXVII

‘Over the land is felt a sudden pause,
As night and day those ruthless bands around
The watch of love is kept — a trance which awes
The thoughts of men with hope; as when the sound
Of whirlwind, whose fierce blasts the waves and clouds confound,
Dies suddenly, the mariner in fear
Feels silence sink upon his heart — thus bound
The conquerors pause; and oh! may freemen ne’er
Clasp the relentless knees of Dread, the murderer!

XXVIII

‘If blood be shed, ‘t is but a change and choice
Of bonds — from slavery to cowardice, —
A wretched fall! Uplift thy charmèd voice,
Pour on those evil men the love that lies
Hovering within those spirit-soothing eyes!
Arise, my friend, farewell!’ — As thus he spake,
From the green earth lightly I did arise,
As one out of dim dreams that doth awake,
And looked upon the depth of that reposing lake.

XXIX

I saw my countenance reflected there; —
And then my youth fell on me like a wind

Descending on still waters. My thin hair
Was prematurely gray; my face was lined
With channels, such as suffering leaves behind,
Not age; my brow was pale, but in my cheek
And lips a flush of gnawing fire did find
Their food and dwelling; though mine eyes might speak
A subtle mind and strong within a frame thus weak.

XXX

And though their lustre now was spent and faded,
Yet in my hollow looks and withered mien
The likeness of a shape for which was braided
The brightest woof of genius still was seen —
One who, methought, had gone from the world's scene,
And left it vacant—'t was her lover's face —
It might resemble her — it once had been
The mirror of her thoughts, and still the grace
Which her mind's shadow cast left there a lingering trace.

XXXI

What then was I? She slumbered with the dead.
Glory and joy and peace had come and gone.
Doth the cloud perish when the beams are fled
Which steeped its skirts in gold? or, dark and lone,
Doth it not through the paths of night unknown,
On outspread wings of its own wind upborne,
Pour rain upon the earth? the stars are shown,
When the cold moon sharpens her silver horn
Under the sea, and make the wide night not forlorn.

XXXII

Strengthened in heart, yet sad, that aged man
I left, with interchange of looks and tears
And lingering speech, and to the Camp began
My war. O'er many a mountain-chain which rears

Its hundred crests aloft my spirit bears
My frame, o'er many a dale and many a moor;
And gayly now meseems serene earth wears
The blosmy spring's star-bright investiture, —
A vision which aught sad from sadness might allure.

XXXIII

My powers revived within me, and I went,
As one whom winds waft o'er the bending grass,
Through many a vale of that broad continent.
At night when I reposed, fair dreams did pass
Before my pillow; my own Cythna was,
Not like a child of death, among them ever;
When I arose from rest, a woful mass
That gentlest sleep seemed from my life to sever,
As if the light of youth were not withdrawn forever.

XXXIV

Aye as I went, that maiden who had reared
The torch of Truth afar, of whose high deeds
The Hermit in his pilgrimage had heard,
Haunted my thoughts. Ah, Hope its sickness feeds
With whatsoe'er it finds, or flowers or weeds!
Could she be Cythna? Was that corpse a shade
Such as self-torturing thought from madness breeds?
Why was this hope not torture? Yet it made
A light around my step which would not ever fade.

REVOLT OF ISLAM: Canto Fifth

I

OVER the utmost hill at length I sped,
A snowy steep: — the moon was hanging low
Over the Asian mountains, and, outspread
The plain, the City, and the Camp below,
Skirted the midnight Ocean's glimmering flow;
The City's moon-lit spires and myriad lamps
Like stars in a sublunar sky did glow,
And fires blazed far amid the scattered camps,
Like springs of flame which burst where'er swift Earthquake stamps.

II

All slept but those in watchful arms who stood,
And those who sate tending the beacon's light;
And the few sounds from that vast multitude
Made silence more profound. Oh, what a might
Of human thought was cradled in that night!
How many hearts impenetrably veiled
Beat underneath its shade! what secret fight
Evil and Good, in woven passions mailed,
Waged through that silent throng — a war that never failed!

III

And now the Power of Good held victory.
So, through the labyrinth of many a tent,
Among the silent millions who did lie
In innocent sleep, exultingly I went.
The moon had left Heaven desert now, but lent
From eastern morn the first faint lustre showed
An armèd youth; over his spear he bent
His downward face:—'A friend!' I cried aloud,
And quickly common hopes made freemen understood.

IV

I sate beside him while the morning beam
Crept slowly over Heaven, and talked with him
Of those immortal hopes, a glorious theme,
Which led us forth, until the stars grew dim;
And all the while methought his voice did swim,
As if it drownèd in remembrance were
Of thoughts which make the moist eyes overbrim;
At last, when daylight ‘gan to fill the air,
He looked on me, and cried in wonder, ‘Thou art here!’

V

Then, suddenly, I knew it was the youth
In whom its earliest hopes my spirit found;
But envious tongues had stained his spotless truth,
And thoughtless pride his love in silence bound,
And shame and sorrow mine in toils had wound,
Whilst he was innocent, and I deluded;
The truth now came upon me — on the ground
Tears of repenting joy, which fast intruded,
Fell fast — and o’er its peace our mingling spirits brooded.

VI

Thus, while with rapid lips and earnest eyes
We talked, a sound of sweeping conflict, spread
As from the earth, did suddenly arise.
From every tent, roused by that clamor dread,
Our bands outsprung and seized their arms; we sped
Towards the sound; our tribes were gathering far.
Those sanguine slaves, amid ten thousand dead
Stabbed in their sleep, trampled in treacherous war
The gentle hearts whose power their lives had sought to spare.

VII

Like rabid snakes that sting some gentle child
Who brings them food when winter false and fair
Allures them forth with its cold smiles, so wild
They rage among the camp; they overbear
The patriot hosts — confusion, then despair,
Descends like night — when ‘Laon!’ one did cry;
Like a bright ghost from Heaven that shout did scare
The slaves, and, widening through the vaulted sky,
Seemed sent from Earth to Heaven in sign of victory.

VIII

In sudden panic those false murderers fled,
Like insect tribes before the northern gale;
But swifter still our hosts encompassèd
Their shattered ranks, and in a craggy vale,
Where even their fierce despair might nought avail,
Hemmed them around! — and then revenge and fear
Made the high virtue of the patriots fail;
One pointed on his foe the mortal spear —
I rushed before its point, and cried ‘Forbear, forbear!’

IX

The spear transfixed my arm that was uplifted
In swift expostulation, and the blood
Gushed round its point; I smiled, and—’Oh! thou gifted
With eloquence which shall not be withstood,
Flow thus!’ I cried in joy, ‘thou vital flood,
Until my heart be dry, ere thus the cause
For which thou wert aught worthy be subdued! —
Ah, ye are pale — ye weep — your passions pause —
‘T is well! ye feel the truth of love’s benignant laws.

X

‘Soldiers, our brethren and our friends are slain;
Ye murdered them, I think, as they did sleep!

Alas, what have ye done? The slightest pain
Which ye might suffer, there were eyes to weep,
But ye have quenched them — there were smiles to steep
Your hearts in balm, but they are lost in woe;
And those whom love did set his watch to keep
Around your tents truth's freedom to bestow,
Ye stabbed as they did sleep — but they forgive ye now.

XI

'Oh, wherefore should ill ever flow from ill,
And pain still keener pain forever breed?
We all are brethren — even the slaves who kill
For hire are men; and to avenge misdeed
On the misdoer doth but Misery feed
With her own broken heart! O Earth, O Heaven!
And thou, dread Nature, which to every deed
And all that lives, or is, to be hath given,
Even as to thee have these done ill, and are forgiven.

XII

'Join then your hands and hearts, and let the past
Be as a grave which gives not up its dead
To evil thoughts.' — A film then overcast
My sense with dimness, for the wound, which bled
Freshly, swift shadows o'er mine eyes had shed.
When I awoke, I lay 'mid friends and foes,
And earnest countenances on me shed
The light of questioning looks, whilst one did close
My wound with balmiest herbs, and soothed me to repose;

XIII

And one, whose spear had pierced me, leaned beside
With quivering lips and humid eyes; and all
Seemed like some brothers on a journey wide
Gone forth, whom now strange meeting did befall

In a strange land round one whom they might call
Their friend, their chief, their father, for assay
Of peril, which had saved them from the thrall
Of death, now suffering. Thus the vast array
Of those fraternal bands were reconciled that day.

XIV

Lifting the thunder of their acclamation,
Towards the City then the multitude,
And I among them, went in joy — a nation
Made free by love; a mighty brotherhood
Linked by a jealous interchange of good;
A glorious pageant, more magnificent
Than kingly slaves arrayed in gold and blood,
When they return from carnage, and are sent
In triumph bright beneath the populous battlement.

XV

Afar, the City walls were thronged on high,
And myriads on each giddy turret clung,
And to each spire far lessening in the sky
Bright pennons on the idle winds were hung;
As we approached, a shout of joyance sprung
At once from all the crowd, as if the vast
And peopled Earth its boundless skies among
The sudden clamor of delight had cast,
When from before its face some general wreck had passed.

XVI

Our armies through the City's hundred gates
Were poured, like brooks which to the rocky lair
Of some deep lake, whose silence them awaits,
Throng from the mountains when the storms are there;
And, as we passed through the calm sunny air,
A thousand flower-inwoven crowns were shed,

The token-flowers of truth and freedom fair,
And fairest hands bound them on many a head,
Those angels of love's heaven that over all was spread.

XVII

I trod as one tranced in some rapturous vision;
Those bloody bands so lately reconciled,
Were ever, as they went, by the contrition
Of anger turned to love, from ill beguiled,
And every one on them more gently smiled
Because they had done evil; the sweet awe
Of such mild looks made their own hearts grow mild,
And did with soft attraction ever draw
Their spirits to the love of freedom's equal law.

XVIII

And they, and all, in one loud symphony
My name with Liberty commingling lifted —
'The friend and the preserver of the free!
The parent of this joy!' and fair eyes, gifted
With feelings caught from one who had uplifted
The light of a great spirit, round me shone;
And all the shapes of this grand scenery shifted
Like restless clouds before the steadfast sun.
Where was that Maid? I asked, but it was known of none.

XIX

Laone was the name her love had chosen,
For she was nameless, and her birth none knew.
Where was Laone now? — The words were frozen
Within my lips with fear; but to subdue
Such dreadful hope to my great task was due,
And when at length one brought reply that she
To-morrow would appear, I then withdrew

To judge what need for that great throng might be,
For now the stars came thick over the twilight sea.

XX

Yet need was none for rest or food to care,
Even though that multitude was passing great,
Since each one for the other did prepare
All kindly succor. Therefore to the gate
Of the Imperial House, now desolate,
I passed, and there was found aghast, alone,
The fallen Tyrant! — silently he sate
Upon the footstool of his golden throne,
Which, starred with sunny gems, in its own lustre shone.

XXI

Alone, but for one child who led before him
A graceful dance — the only living thing,
Of all the crowd, which thither to adore him
Flocked yesterday, who solace sought to bring
In his abandonment; she knew the King
Had praised her dance of yore, and now she wove
Its circles, aye weeping and murmuring,
‘Mid her sad task of unregarded love,
That to no smiles it might his speechless sadness move.

XXII

She fled to him, and wildly clasped his feet
When human steps were heard; he moved nor spoke,
Nor changed his hue, nor raised his looks to meet
The gaze of strangers. Our loud entrance woke
The echoes of the hall, which circling broke
The calm of its recesses; like a tomb
Its sculptured walls vacantly to the stroke
Of footfalls answered, and the twilight’s gloom
Lay like a charnel’s mist within the radiant dome.

XXIII

The little child stood up when we came nigh;
Her lips and cheeks seemed very pale and wan,
But on her forehead and within her eye
Lay beauty which makes hearts that feed thereon
Sick with excess of sweetness; on the throne
She leaned; the King, with gathered brow and lips
Wreathed by long scorn, did inly sneer and frown,
With hue like that when some great painter dips
His pencil in the gloom of earthquake and eclipse.

XXIV

She stood beside him like a rainbow braided
Within some storm, when scarce its shadows vast
From the blue paths of the swift sun have faded;
A sweet and solemn smile, like Cythna's, cast
One moment's light, which made my heart beat fast,
O'er that child's parted lips — a gleam of bliss,
A shade of vanished days; as the tears passed
Which wrapped it, even as with a father's kiss
I pressed those softest eyes in trembling tenderness.

XXV

The sceptred wretch then from that solitude
I drew, and, of his change compassionate,
With words of sadness soothed his rugged mood.
But he, while pride and fear held deep debate,
With sullen guile of ill-dissembled hate
Glared on me as a toothless snake might glare;
Pity, not scorn, I felt, though desolate
The desolator now, and unaware
The curses which he mocked had caught him by the hair.

XXVI

I led him forth from that which now might seem
A gorgeous grave; through portals sculptured deep
With imagery beautiful as dream
We went, and left the shades which tend on sleep
Over its unregarded gold to keep
Their silent watch. The child trod faintingly,
And as she went, the tears which she did weep
Glanced in the star-light; wilderèd seemed she,
And, when I spake, for sobs she could not answer me.

XXVII

At last the Tyrant cried, ‘She hungers, slave!
Stab her, or give her bread!’ — It was a tone
Such as sick fancies in a new-made grave
Might hear. I trembled, for the truth was known, —
He with this child had thus been left alone,
And neither had gone forth for food, but he
In mingled pride and awe cowered near his throne,
And she, a nursling of captivity,
Knew nought beyond those walls, nor what such change might be.

XXVIII

And he was troubled at a charm withdrawn
Thus suddenly — that sceptres ruled no more,
That even from gold the dreadful strength was gone
Which once made all things subject to its power;
Such wonder seized him as if hour by hour
The past had come again; and the swift fall
Of one so great and terrible of yore
To desolateness, in the hearts of all
Like wonder stirred who saw such awful change befall.

XXIX

A mighty crowd, such as the wide land pours
Once in a thousand years, now gathered round

The fallen Tyrant; like the rush of showers
Of hail in spring, pattering along the ground,
Their many footsteps fell — else came no sound
From the wide multitude; that lonely man
Then knew the burden of his change, and found,
Concealing in the dust his visage wan,
Refuge from the keen looks which through his bosom ran.

XXX

And he was faint withal. I sate beside him
Upon the earth, and took that child so fair
From his weak arms, that ill might none betide him
Or her; when food was brought to them, her share
To his averted lips the child did bear,
But, when she saw he had enough, she ate,
And wept the while; the lonely man's despair
Hunger then overcame, and, of his state
Forgetful, on the dust as in a trance he sate.

XXXI

Slowly the silence of the multitudes
Passed, as when far is heard in some lone dell
The gathering of a wind among the woods:
'And he is fallen!' they cry, 'he who did dwell
Like famine or the plague, or aught more fell,
Among our homes, is fallen! the murderer
Who slaked his thirsting soul, as from a well
Of blood and tears, with ruin! he is here!
Sunk in a gulf of scorn from which none may him rear!'

XXXII

Then was heard—'He who judged, let him be brought
To judgment! blood for blood cries from the soil
On which his crimes have deep pollution wrought!
Shall Othman only unavenged despoil?

Shall they, who by the stress of grinding toil
Wrest from the unwilling earth his luxuries,
Perish for crime, while his foul blood may boil
Or creep within his veins at will? Arise!
And to high Justice make her chosen sacrifice!'

XXXIII

'What do ye seek? what fear ye?' then I cried,
Suddenly starting forth, 'that ye should shed
The blood of Othman? if your hearts are tried
In the true love of freedom, cease to dread
This one poor lonely man; beneath Heaven spread
In purest light above us all, through Earth —
Maternal Earth, who doth her sweet smiles shed
For all — let him go free, until the worth
Of human nature win from these a second birth.

XXXIV

'What call ye *justice?* Is there one who ne'er
In secret thought has wished another's ill?
Are ye all pure? Let those stand forth who hear
And tremble not. Shall they insult and kill,
If such they be? their mild eyes can they fill
With the false anger of the hypocrite?
Alas, such were not pure! The chastened will
Of virtue sees that justice is the light
Of love, and not revenge and terror and despite.'

XXXV

The murmur of the people, slowly dying,
Paused as I spake; then those who near me were
Cast gentle looks where the lone man was lying
Shrouding his head, which now that infant fair
Clasped on her lap in silence; through the air
Sobs were then heard, and many kissed my feet

In pity's madness, and to the despair
Of him whom late they cursed a solace sweet
His very victims brought — soft looks and speeches meet.

XXXVI

Then to a home for his repose assigned,
Accompanied by the still throng, he went
In silence, where to soothe his rankling mind
Some likeness of his ancient state was lent;
And if his heart could have been innocent
As those who pardoned him, he might have ended
His days in peace; but his straight lips were bent,
Men said, into a smile which guile portended, —
A sight with which that child, like hope with fear, was blended.

XXXVII

'T was midnight now, the eve of that great day
Whereon the many nations, at whose call
The chains of earth like mist melted away,
Decreed to hold a sacred Festival,
A rite to attest the equality of all
Who live. So to their homes, to dream or wake,
All went. The sleepless silence did recall
Laone to my thoughts, with hopes that make
The flood recede from which their thirst they seek to slake.

XXXVIII

The dawn flowed forth, and from its purple fountains
I drank those hopes which make the spirit quail,
As to the plain between the misty mountains
And the great City, with a countenance pale,
I went. It was a sight which might avail
To make men weep exulting tears, for whom
Now first from human power the reverend veil

Was torn, to see Earth from her general womb
Pour forth her swarming sons to a fraternal doom:

XXXIX

To see, far glancing in the misty morning,
The signs of that innumerable host;
To hear one sound of many made, the warning
Of Earth to Heaven from its free children tossed;
While the eternal hills, and the sea lost
In wavering light, and, starring the blue sky,
The City's myriad spires of gold, almost
With human joy made mute society —
Its witnesses with men who must hereafter be:

XL

To see, like some vast island from the Ocean,
The Altar of the Federation rear
Its pile i' the midst — a work which the devotion
Of millions in one night created there,
Sudden as when the moonrise makes appear
Strange clouds in the east — a marble pyramid
Distinct with steps; — that mighty shape did wear
The light of genius; its still shadow hid
Far ships; to know its height the morning mists forbid! —

XLI

To hear the restless multitudes forever
Around the base of that great Altar flow,
As on some mountain islet burst and shiver
Atlantic waves; and, solemnly and slow,
As the wind bore that tumult to and fro,
To feel the dreamlike music, which did swim
Like beams through floating clouds on waves below,
Falling in pauses, from that Altar dim,
As silver-sounding tongues breathed an aërial hymn.

XLII

To hear, to see, to live, was on that morn
Lethean joy! so that all those assembled
Cast off their memories of the past outworn;
Two only bosoms with their own life trembled,
And mine was one, — and we had both dissembled;
So with a beating heart I went, and one,
Who having much, covets yet more, resembled, —
A lost and dear possession, which not won,
He walks in lonely gloom beneath the noonday sun.

XLIII

To the great Pyramid I came; its stair
With female choirs was thronged, the loveliest
Among the free, grouped with its sculptures rare.
As I approached, the morning's golden mist,
Which now the wonder-stricken breezes kissed
With their cold lips, fled, and the summit shone
Like Athos seen from Samothracia, dressed
In earliest light, by vintagers; and One
Sate there, a female Shape upon an ivory throne: —

XLIV

A Form most like the imagined habitant
Of silver exhalations sprung from dawn,
By winds which feed on sunrise woven, to enchant
The faiths of men. All mortal eyes were drawn —
As famished mariners through strange seas gone
Gaze on a burning watch-tower — by the light
Of those divinest lineaments. Alone,
With thoughts which none could share, from that fair sight
I turned in sickness, for a veil shrouded her countenance bright.

XLV

And neither did I hear the acclamations,
Which from brief silence bursting filled the air
With her strange name and mine, from all the nations

Which we, they said, in strength had gathered there
From the sleep of bondage; nor the vision fair
Of that bright pageantry beheld; but blind
And silent, as a breathing corpse, did fare,
Leaning upon my friend, till like a wind
To fevered cheeks a voice flowed o'er my troubled mind.

XLVI

Like music of some minstrel heavenly gifted,
To one whom fiends enthrall, this voice to me;
Scarce did I wish her veil to be uplifted,
I was so calm and joyous. I could see
The platform where we stood, the statues three
Which kept their marble watch on that high shrine,
The multitudes, the mountains, and the sea, —
As, when eclipse hath passed, things sudden shine
To men's astonished eyes most clear and crystalline.

XLVII

At first Laone spoke most tremulously;
But soon her voice the calmness which it shed
Gathered, and—'Thou art whom I sought to see,
And thou art our first votary here,' she said;
'I had a dear friend once, but he is dead!
And, of all those on the wide earth who breathe,
Thou dost resemble him alone. I spread
This veil between us two that thou beneath
Shouldst image one who may have been long lost in death.

XLVIII

'For this wilt thou not henceforth pardon me?
Yes, but those joys which silence well requite
Forbid reply. Why men have chosen me
To be the Priestess of this holiest rite
I scarcely know, but that the floods of light
Which flow over the world have borne me hither
To meet thee, long most dear. And now unite

Thine hand with mine, and may all comfort wither
From both the hearts whose pulse in joy now beat together,

XLIX

‘If our own will as others’ law we bind,
If the foul worship trampled here we fear,
If as ourselves we cease to love our kind!’ —
She paused, and pointed upwards — sculptured there
Three shapes around her ivory throne appear.
One was a Giant, like a child asleep
On a loose rock, whose grasp crushed, as it were
In dream, sceptres and crowns; and one did keep
Its watchful eyes in doubt whether to smile or weep —

L

A Woman sitting on the sculptured disk
Of the broad earth, and feeding from one breast
A human babe and a young basilisk;
Her looks were sweet as Heaven’s when loveliest
In Autumn eves. The third Image was dressed
In white wings swift as clouds in winter skies;
Beneath his feet, ‘mongst ghastliest forms, repressed
Lay Faith, an obscene worm, who sought to rise, —
While calmly on the Sun he turned his diamond eyes.

LI

Beside that Image then I sate, while she
Stood ‘mid the throngs which ever ebbed and flowed,
Like light amid the shadows of the sea
Cast from one cloudless star, and on the crowd
That touch which none who feels forgets bestowed;
And whilst the sun returned the steadfast gaze
Of the great Image, as o’er Heaven it glode,
That rite had place; it ceased when sunset’s blaze
Burned o’er the isles; all stood in joy and deep amaze —
When in the silence of all spirits there

Laone's voice was felt, and through the air
Her thrilling gestures spoke, most eloquently fair.

1

'Calm art thou as yon sunset! swift and strong
As new-fledged Eagles beautiful and young,
That float among the blinding beams of morning;
And underneath thy feet writhe Faith and Folly,
Custom and Hell and mortal Melancholy.
Hark! the Earth starts to hear the mighty warning
Of thy voice sublime and holy;
Its free spirits here assembled
See thee, feel thee, know thee now;
To thy voice their hearts have trembled,
Like ten thousand clouds which flow
With one wide wind as it flies!
Wisdom! thy irresistible children rise
To hail thee; and the elements they chain,
And their own will, to swell the glory of thy train!

2

'O Spirit vast and deep as Night and Heaven,
Mother and soul of all to which is given
The light of life, the loveliness of being!
Lo! thou dost reascend the human heart,
Thy throne of power, almighty as thou wert
In dreams of Poets old grown pale by seeing
The shade of thee; — now millions start
To feel thy lightnings through them burning!
Nature, or God, or Love, or Pleasure,
Or Sympathy, the sad tears turning
To mutual smiles, a drainless treasure,
Descends amidst us! Scorn and Hate,
Revenge and Selfishness, are desolate!
A hundred nations swear that there shall be
Pity and Peace and Love among the good and free!

3

‘Eldest of things, divine Equality!
Wisdom and Love are but the slaves of thee,
The angels of thy sway, who pour around thee
Treasures from all the cells of human thought
And from the Stars and from the Ocean brought,
And the last living heart whose beatings bound thee.
The powerful and the wise had sought
Thy coming; thou, in light descending
O’er the wide land which is thine own,
Like the spring whose breath is blending
All blasts of fragrance into one,
Comest upon the paths of men!
Earth bares her general bosom to thy ken,
And all her children here in glory meet
To feed upon thy smiles, and clasp thy sacred feet.

4

‘My brethren, we are free! the plains and mountains,
The gray sea-shore, the forests and the fountains,
Are haunts of happiest dwellers; man and woman,
Their common bondage burst, may freely borrow
From lawless love a solace for their sorrow;
For oft we still must weep, since we are human.
A stormy night’s serenest morrow,
Whose showers are pity’s gentle tears,
Whose clouds are smiles of those that die
Like infants without hopes or fears,
And whose beams are joys that lie
In blended hearts, now holds dominion, —
The dawn of mind, which, upwards on a pinion
Borne, swift as sunrise, far illumines space,
And clasps this barren world in its own bright embrace!

5

‘My brethren, we are free! the fruits are glowing
Beneath the stars, and the night-winds are flowing

O’er the ripe corn, the birds and beasts are dreaming.
Never again may blood of bird or beast
Stain with its venomous stream a human feast,
To the pure skies in accusation steaming!
Avenging poisons shall have ceased
To feed disease and fear and madness;
The dwellers of the earth and air
Shall throng around our steps in gladness,
Seeking their food or refuge there.
Our toil from thought all glorious forms shall cull,
To make this earth, our home, more beautiful,
And Science, and her sister Poesy,
Shall clothe in light the fields and cities of the free!

6

‘Victory, Victory to the prostrate nations!
Bear witness, Night, and ye mute Constellations
Who gaze on us from your crystalline cars!
Thoughts have gone forth whose powers can sleep no more!
Victory! Victory! Earth’s remotest shore,
Regions which groan beneath the Antarctic stars,
The green lands cradled in the roar
Of western waves, and wildernesses
Peopled and vast which skirt the oceans,
Where Morning dyes her golden tresses,
Shall soon partake our high emotions.
Kings shall turn pale! Almighty Fear,
The Fiend-God, when our charmèd name he hear,
Shall fade like shadow from his thousand fanes,
While Truth with Joy enthroned o’er his lost empire reigns!’

LII

Ere she had ceased, the mists of night entwining
Their dim woof floated o’er the infinite throng;
She, like a spirit through the darkness shining,
In tones whose sweetness silence did prolong
As if to lingering winds they did belong,

Poured forth her inmost soul: a passionate speech
With wild and thrilling pauses woven among,
Which whoso heard was mute, for it could teach
To rapture like her own all listening hearts to reach.

LIII

Her voice was as a mountain stream which sweeps
The withered leaves of autumn to the lake,
And in some deep and narrow bay then sleeps
In the shadow of the shores; as dead leaves wake,
Under the wave, in flowers and herbs which make
Those green depths beautiful when skies are blue,
The multitude so moveless did partake
Such living change, and kindling murmurs flew
As o'er that speechless calm delight and wonder grew.

LIV

Over the plain the throngs were scattered then
In groups around the fires, which from the sea
Even to the gorge of the first mountain glen
Blazed wide and far; the banquet of the free
Was spread beneath many a dark cypress tree,
Beneath whose spires, which swayed in the red flame,
Reclining as they ate, of Liberty
And Hope and Justice and Laone's name
Earth's children did a woof of happy converse frame.

LV

Their feast was such as Earth, the general mother,
Pours from her fairest bosom, when she smiles
In the embrace of Autumn; to each other
As when some parent fondly reconciles
Her warring children — she their wrath beguiles
With her own sustenance, they relenting weep —
Such was this Festival, which from their isles
And continents and winds and oceans deep
All shapes might throng to share that fly or walk or creep;

LVI

Might share in peace and innocence, for gore
Or poison none this festal did pollute,
But, piled on high, an overflowing store
Of pomegranates and citrons, fairest fruit,
Melons, and dates, and figs, and many a root
Sweet and sustaining, and bright grapes ere yet
Accursed fire their mild juice could transmute
Into a mortal bane, and brown corn set
In baskets; with pure streams their thirsting lips they wet.

LVII

Laone had descended from the shrine,
And every deepest look and holiest mind
Fed on her form, though now those tones divine
Were silent as she passed; she did unwind
Her veil, as with the crowds of her own kind
She mixed; some impulse made my heart refrain
From seeking her that night, so I reclined
Amidst a group, where on the utmost plain
A festal watch-fire burned beside the dusky main.

LVIII

And joyous was our feast; pathetic talk,
And wit, and harmony of choral strains,
While far Orion o'er the waves did walk
That flow among the isles, held us in chains
Of sweet captivity which none disdains
Who feels; but, when his zone grew dim in mist
Which clothes the Ocean's bosom, o'er the plains
The multitudes went homeward to their rest,
Which that delightful day with its own shadow blest.

REVOLT OF ISLAM: Canto Sixth

I

BESIDE the dimness of the glimmering sea,
Weaving swift language from impassioned themes,
With that dear friend I lingered, who to me
So late had been restored, beneath the gleams
Of the silver stars; and ever in soft dreams
Of future love and peace sweet converse lapped
Our willing fancies, till the pallid beams
Of the last watch-fire fell, and darkness wrapped
The waves, and each bright chain of floating fire was snapped,

II

And till we came even to the City's wall
And the great gate. Then, none knew whence or why,
Disquiet on the multitudes did fall;
And first, one pale and breathless passed us by,
And stared and spoke not; then with piercing cry
A troop of wild-eyed women — by the shrieks
Of their own terror driven, tumultuously
Hither and thither hurrying with pale cheeks —
Each one from fear unknown a sudden refuge seeks

III

Then, rallying cries of treason and of danger
Resounded, and—'They come! to arms! to arms!
The Tyrant is amongst us, and the stranger
Comes to enslave us in his name! to arms!'
In vain: for Panic, the pale fiend who charms
Strength to forswear her right, those millions swept
Like waves before the tempest. These alarms
Came to me, as to know their cause I leapt
On the gate's turret, and in rage and grief and scorn I wept!

IV

For to the north I saw the town on fire,
And its red light made morning pallid now,
Which burst over wide Asia; — louder, higher,
The yells of victory and the screams of woe
I heard approach, and saw the throng below
Stream through the gates like foam-wrought waterfalls
Fed from a thousand storms — the fearful glow
Of bombs flares overhead — at intervals
The red artillery's bolt mangling among them falls.

V

And now the horsemen come — and all was done
Swifter than I have spoken — I beheld
Their red swords flash in the unrisen sun.
I rushed among the rout to have repelled
That miserable flight — one moment quelled
By voice, and looks, and eloquent despair,
As if reproach from their own hearts withheld
Their steps, they stood; but soon came pouring there
New multitudes, and did those rallied bands o'erbear.

VI

I strove, as drifted on some cataract
By irresistible streams some wretch might strive
Who hears its fatal roar; the files compact
Whelmed me, and from the gate availed to drive
With quickening impulse, as each bolt did rive
Their ranks with bloodier chasm; into the plain
Disgorged at length the dead and the alive
In one dread mass were parted, and the stain
Of blood from mortal steel fell o'er the fields like rain.

VII

For now the despot's bloodhounds with their prey,
Unarmed and unaware, were gorging deep
Their gluttony of death; the loose array
Of horsemen o'er the wide fields murdering sweep,
And with loud laughter for their Tyrant reap
A harvest sown with other hopes; the while,
Far overhead, ships from Propontis keep
A killing rain of fire. When the waves smile
As sudden earthquakes light many a volcano isle,

VIII

Thus sudden, unexpected feast was spread
For the carrion fowls of Heaven. I saw the sight —
I moved — I lived — as o'er the heaps of dead,
Whose stony eyes glared in the morning light,
I trod; to me there came no thought of flight,
But with loud cries of scorn, which whoso heard
That dreaded death felt in his veins the might
Of virtuous shame return, the crowd I stirred,
And desperation's hope in many hearts recurred.

IX

A band of brothers gathering round me made,
Although unarmed, a steadfast front, and, still
Retreating, with stern looks beneath the shade
Of gathered eyebrows, did the victors fill
With doubt even in success; deliberate will
Inspired our growing troop; not overthrown,
It gained the shelter of a grassy hill, —
And ever still our comrades were hewn down,
And their defenceless limbs beneath our footsteps strown.

X

Immovably we stood; in joy I found
Beside me then, firm as a giant pine

Among the mountain vapors driven around,
The old man whom I loved; his eyes divine
With a mild look of courage answered mine,
And my young friend was near, and ardently
His hand grasped mine a moment; now the line
Of war extended, to our rallying cry
As myriads flocked in love and brotherhood to die.

XI

For ever while the sun was climbing Heaven
The horseman hewed our unarmed myriads down
Safely, though when by thirst of carnage driven
Too near, those slaves were swiftly overthrown
By hundreds leaping on them; flesh and bone
Soon made our ghastly ramparts; then the shaft
Of the artillery from the sea was thrown
More fast and fiery, and the conquerors laughed
In pride to hear the wind our screams of torment waft.

XII

For on one side alone the hill gave shelter,
So vast that phalanx of unconquered men,
And there the living in the blood did welter
Of the dead and dying, which in that green glen,
Like stifled torrents, made a plashy fen
Under the feet. Thus was the butchery waged
While the sun clomb Heaven's eastern steep; but, when
It 'gan to sink, a fiercer combat raged,
For in more doubtful strife the armies were engaged.

XIII

Within a cave upon the hill were found
A bundle of rude pikes, the instrument
Of those who war but on their native ground
For natural rights; a shout of joyance, sent

Even from our hearts, the wide air pierced and rent,
As those few arms the bravest and the best
Seized, and each sixth, thus armed, did now present
A line which covered and sustained the rest,
A confident phalanx which the foes on every side invest.

XIV

That onset turned the foes to flight almost;
But soon they saw their present strength, and knew
That coming night would to our resolute host
Bring victory; so, dismounting, close they drew
Their glittering files, and then the combat grew
Unequal but most horrible; and ever
Our myriads, whom the swift bolt overthrew,
Or the red sword, failed like a mountain river
Which rushes forth in foam to sink in sands forever.

XV

Sorrow and shame, to see with their own kind
Our human brethren mix, like beasts of blood,
To mutual ruin armed by one behind
Who sits and scoffs! — that friend so mild and good,
Who like its shadow near my youth had stood,
Was stabbed! — my old preserver's hoary hair,
With the flesh clinging to its roots, was strewed
Under my feet! I lost all sense or care,
And like the rest I grew desperate and unaware.

XVI

The battle became ghastlier; in the midst
I paused, and saw how ugly and how fell,
O Hate! thou art, even when thy life thou shedd'st
For love. The ground in many a little dell
Was broken, up and down whose steeps befell
Alternate victory and defeat; and there

The combatants with rage most horrible
Strove, and their eyes started with cracking stare,
And impotent their tongues they lolled into the air,

XVII

Flaccid and foamy, like a mad dog's hanging.
Want, and Moon-madness, and the pest's swift Bane,
When its shafts smite — while yet its bow is twanging —
Have each their mark and sign, some ghastly stain;
And this was thine, O War! of hate and pain
Thou loathèd slave! I saw all shapes of death,
And ministered to many, o'er the plain
While carnage in the sunbeam's warmth did seethe,
Till Twilight o'er the east wove her serenest wreath.

XVIII

The few who yet survived, resolute and firm,
Around me fought. At the decline of day,
Winding above the mountain's snowy term,
New banners shone; they quivered in the ray
Of the sun's unseen orb; ere night the array
Of fresh troops hemmed us in — of those brave bands
I soon survived alone — and now I lay
Vanquished and faint, the grasp of bloody hands
I felt, and saw on high the glare of falling brands,

XIX

When on my foes a sudden terror came,
And they fled, scattering. — Lo! with reinless speed
A black Tartarian horse of giant frame,
Comes trampling over the dead; the living bleed
Beneath the hoofs of that tremendous steed,
On which, like to an Angel, robed in white,
Sate one waving a sword; the hosts recede

And fly, as through their ranks, with awful might
Sweeps in the shadow of eve that Phantom swift and bright;

XX

And its path made a solitude. I rose
And marked its coming; it relaxed its course
As it approached me, and the wind that flows
Through night bore accents to mine ear whose force
Might create smiles in death. The Tartar horse
Paused, and I saw the shape its might which swayed,
And heard her musical pants, like the sweet source
Of waters in the desert, as she said,
'Mount with me, Laon, now' — I rapidly obeyed.

XXI

Then, 'Away! away!' she cried, and stretched her sword
As 't were a scourge over the courser's head,
And lightly shook the reins. We spake no word,
But like the vapor of the tempest fled
Over the plain; her dark hair was dispread
Like the pine's locks upon the lingering blast;
Over mine eyes its shadowy strings it spread
Fitfully, and the hills and streams fled fast,
As o'er their glimmering forms the steed's broad shadow passed.

XXII

And his hoofs ground the rocks to fire and dust,
His strong sides made the torrents rise in spray,
And turbulence, as of a whirlwind's gust,
Surrounded us; — and still away, away,
Through the desert night we sped, while she alway
Gazed on a mountain which we neared, whose crest,
Crowned with a marble ruin, in the ray
Of the obscure stars gleamed; its rugged breast
The steed strained up, and then his impulse did arrest.

XXIII

A rocky hill which overhung the Ocean: —
From that lone ruin, when the steed that panted
Paused, might be heard the murmur of the motion
Of waters, as in spots forever haunted
By the choicest winds of Heaven which are enchanted
To music by the wand of Solitude,
That wizard wild, — and the far tents implanted
Upon the plain, be seen by those who stood
Thence marking the dark shore of Ocean's curvèd flood.

XXIV

One moment these were heard and seen — another
Passed; and the two who stood beneath that night
Each only heard or saw or felt the other.
As from the lofty steed she did alight,
Cythna (for, from the eyes whose deepest light
Of love and sadness made my lips feel pale
With influence strange of mournfullest delight,
My own sweet Cythna looked) with joy did quail,
And felt her strength in tears of human weakness fail.

XXV

And for a space in my embrace she rested,
Her head on my unquiet heart reposing,
While my faint arms her languid frame invested;
At length she looked on me, and, half unclosing
Her tremulous lips, said, 'Friend, thy bands were losing
The battle, as I stood before the King
In bonds. I burst them then, and, swiftly choosing
The time, did seize a Tartar's sword, and spring
Upon his horse, and swift as on the whirlwind's wing

XXVI

‘Have thou and I been borne beyond pursuer,
And we are here.’ Then, turning to the steed,
She pressed the white moon on his front with pure
And rose-like lips, and many a fragrant weed
From the green ruin plucked that he might feed;
But I to a stone seat that Maiden led,
And, kissing her fair eyes, said, ‘Thou hast need
Of rest,’ and I heaped up the courser’s bed
In a green mossy nook, with mountain flowers dispread.

XXVII

Within that ruin, where a shattered portal
Looks to the eastern stars — abandoned now
By man to be the home of things immortal,
Memories, like awful ghosts which come and go,
And must inherit all he builds below
When he is gone — a hall stood; o’er whose roof
Fair clinging weeds with ivy pale did grow,
Clasping its gray rents with a verdurous woof,
A hanging dome of leaves, a canopy moon-proof.

XXVIII

The autumnal winds, as if spell-bound, had made
A natural couch of leaves in that recess,
Which seasons none disturbed; but, in the shade
Of flowering parasites, did Spring love to dress
With their sweet blooms the wintry loneliness
Of those dead leaves, shedding their stars whene’er
The wandering wind her nurslings might caress;
Whose intertwining fingers ever there
Made music wild and soft that filled the listening air.

XXIX

We know not where we go, or what sweet dream
May pilot us through caverns strange and fair

Of far and pathless passion, while the stream
Of life our bark doth on its whirlpools bear,
Spreading swift wings as sails to the dim air;
Nor should we seek to know, so the devotion
Of love and gentle thoughts be heard still there
Louder and louder from the utmost Ocean
Of universal life, attuning its commotion.

XXX

To the pure all things are pure! Oblivion wrapped
Our spirits, and the fearful overthrow
Of public hope was from our being snapped,
Though linkèd years had bound it there; for now
A power, a thirst, a knowledge, which below
All thoughts, like light beyond the atmosphere
Clothing its clouds with grace, doth ever flow,
Came on us, as we sate in silence there,
Beneath the golden stars of the clear azure air; —

XXXI

In silence which doth follow talk that causes
The baffled heart to speak with sighs and tears,
When wildering passion swalloweth up the pauses
Of inexpressive speech; — the youthful years
Which we together passed, their hopes and fears,
The blood itself which ran within our frames,
That likeness of the features which endears
The thoughts expressed by them, our very names,
And all the wingèd hours which speechless memory claims,

XXXII

Had found a voice; and ere that voice did pass,
The night grew damp and dim, and, through a rent
Of the ruin where we sate, from the morass
A wandering Meteor by some wild wind sent

Hung high in the green dome, to which it lent
A faint and pallid lustre; while the song
Of blasts, in which its blue hair quivering bent,
Strewed strangest sounds the moving leaves among;
A wondrous light, the sound as of a spirit's tongue.

XXXIII

The Meteor showed the leaves on which we sate,
And Cythna's glowing arms, and the thick ties
Of her soft hair which bent with gathered weight
My neck near hers; her dark and deepening eyes,
Which, as twin phantoms of one star that lies
O'er a dim well move though the star reposes,
Swam in our mute and liquid ecstasies;
Her marble brow, and eager lips, like roses,
With their own fragrance pale, which Spring but half uncloses.

XXXIV

The Meteor to its far morass returned.
The beating of our veins one interval
Made still; and then I felt the blood that burned
Within her frame mingle with mine, and fall
Around my heart like fire; and over all
A mist was spread, the sickness of a deep
And speechless swoon of joy, as might befall
Two disunited spirits when they leap
In union from this earth's obscure and fading sleep.

XXXV

Was it one moment that confounded thus
All thought, all sense, all feeling, into one
Unutterable power, which shielded us
Even from our own cold looks, when we had gone
Into a wide and wild oblivion
Of tumult and of tenderness? or now

Had ages, such as make the moon and sun,
The seasons, and mankind their changes know,
Left fear and time unfelt by us alone below?

XXXVI

I know not. What are kisses whose fire clasps
The failing heart in languishment, or limb
Twined within limb? or the quick dying gasps
Of the life meeting, when the faint eyes swim
Through tears of a wide mist boundless and dim,
In one caress? What is the strong control
Which leads the heart that dizzy steep to climb
Where far over the world those vapors roll
Which blend two restless frames in one reposing soul?

XXXVII

It is the shadow which doth float unseen,
But not unfelt, o'er blind mortality,
Whose divine darkness fled not from that green
And lone recess, where lapped in peace did lie
Our linkèd frames, till, from the changing sky
That night and still another day had fled;
And then I saw and felt. The moon was high,
And clouds, as of a coming storm, were spread
Under its orb, — loud winds were gathering overhead.

XXXVIII

Cythna's sweet lips seemed lurid in the moon,
Her fairest limbs with the night wind were chill,
And her dark tresses were all loosely strewn
O'er her pale bosom; all within was still,
And the sweet peace of joy did almost fill
The depth of her unfathomable look;
And we sate calmly, though that rocky hill

The waves contending in its caverns strook,
For they foreknew the storm, and the gray ruin shook.

XXXIX

There we unheeding sate in the communion
Of interchangèd vows, which, with a rite
Of faith most sweet and sacred, stamped our union.
Few were the living hearts which could unite
Like ours, or celebrate a bridal night
With such close sympathies, for they had sprung
From linkèd youth, and from the gentle might
Of earliest love, delayed and cherished long,
Which common hopes and fears made, like a tempest, strong.

XL

And such is Nature's law divine that those
Who grow together cannot choose but love,
If faith or custom do not interpose,
Or common slavery mar what else might move
All gentlest thoughts. As in the sacred grove
Which shades the springs of Æthiopian Nile,
That living tree which, if the arrowy dove
Strike with her shadow, shrinks in fear awhile,
But its own kindred leaves clasps while the sunbeams smile,

XLI

And clings to them when darkness may dissever
The close caresses of all duller plants
Which bloom on the wide earth; — thus we forever
Were linked, for love had nursed us in the haunts
Where knowledge from its secret source enchants
Young hearts with the fresh music of its springing,
Ere yet its gathered flood feeds human wants
As the great Nile feeds Egypt, — ever flinging
Light on the woven boughs which o'er its waves are swinging.

XLII

The tones of Cythna's voice like echoes were
Of those far murmuring streams; they rose and fell,
Mixed with mine own in the tempestuous air;
And so we sate, until our talk befell
Of the late ruin, swift and horrible,
And how those seeds of hope might yet be sown,
Whose fruit is Evil's mortal poison. Well,
For us, this ruin made a watch-tower lone,
But Cythna's eyes looked faint, and now two days were gone

XLIII

Since she had food. Therefore I did awaken
The Tartar steed, who, from his ebon mane
Soon as the clinging slumbers he had shaken,
Bent his thin head to seek the brazen rein,
Following me obediently. With pain
Of heart so deep and dread that one caress,
When lips and heart refuse to part again
Till they have told their fill, could scarce express
The anguish of her mute and fearful tenderness,

XLIV

Cythna beheld me part, as I bestrode
That willing steed. The tempest and the night,
Which gave my path its safety as I rode
Down the ravine of rocks, did soon unite
The darkness and the tumult of their might
Borne on all winds. — Far through the streaming rain
Floating, at intervals the garments white
Of Cythna gleamed, and her voice once again
Came to me on the gust, and soon I reached the plain.

XLV

I dreaded not the tempest, nor did he
Who bore me, but his eyeballs wide and red
Turned on the lightning's cleft exultingly;

And when the earth beneath his tameless tread
Shook with the sullen thunder, he would spread
His nostrils to the blast, and joyously
Mock the fierce peal with neighings; — thus we sped
O’er the lit plain, and soon I could descry
Where Death and Fire had gorged the spoil of victory.

XLVI

There was a desolate village in a wood,
Whose bloom-inwoven leaves now scattering fed
The hungry storm; it was a place of blood,
A heap of hearthless walls; — the flames were dead
Within those dwellings now, — the life had fled
From all those corpses now, — but the wide sky
Flooded with lightning was ribbed overhead
By the black rafters, and around did lie
Women and babes and men, slaughtered confusedly.

XLVII

Beside the fountain in the market-place
Dismounting, I beheld those corpses stare
With horny eyes upon each other’s face,
And on the earth, and on the vacant air,
And upon me, close to the waters where
I stooped to slake my thirst; — I shrank to taste,
For the salt bitterness of blood was there!
But tied the steed beside, and sought in haste
If any yet survived amid that ghastly waste.

XLVIII

No living thing was there beside one woman
Whom I found wandering in the streets, and she
Was withered from a likeness of aught human
Into a fiend, by some strange misery;
Soon as she heard my steps she leaped on me,
And glued her burning lips to mine, and laughed
With a loud, long and frantic laugh of glee,

And cried, ‘Now, mortal, thou hast deeply quaffed
The Plague’s blue kisses — soon millions shall pledge the draught!

XLIX

‘My name is Pestilence; this bosom dry
Once fed two babes — a sister and a brother;
When I came home, one in the blood did lie
Of three death-wounds — the flames had ate the other!
Since then I have no longer been a mother,
But I am Pestilence; hither and thither
I flit about, that I may slay and smother;
All lips which I have kissed must surely wither,
But Death’s — if thou art he, we ‘ll go to work together!

L

‘What seek’st thou here? the moonlight comes in flashes;
The dew is rising dankly from the dell;
‘T will moisten her! and thou shalt see the gashes
In my sweet boy, now full of worms. But tell
First what thou seek’st.’—’I seek for food.’—”T is well,
Thou shalt have food. Famine, my paramour,
Waits for us at the feast — cruel and fell
Is Famine, but he drives not from his door
Those whom these lips have kissed, alone. No more, no more!’

LI

As thus she spake, she grasped me with the strength
Of madness, and by many a ruined hearth
She led, and over many a corpse. At length
We came to a lone hut, where on the earth
Which made its floor she in her ghastly mirth,
Gathering from all those homes now desolate,
Had piled three heaps of loaves, making a dearth
Among the dead — round which she set in state
A ring of cold, stiff babes; silent and stark they sate.

LII

She leaped upon a pile, and lifted high

Her mad looks to the lightning, and cried, ‘Eat!
Share the great feast — to-morrow we must die!’
And then she spurned the loaves with her pale feet
Towards her bloodless guests; — that sight to meet,
Mine eyes and my heart ached, and but that she
Who loved me did with absent looks defeat
Despair, I might have raved in sympathy;
But now I took the food that woman offered me;

LIII

And vainly having with her madness striven
If I might win her to return with me,
Departed. In the eastern beams of Heaven
The lightning now grew pallid, rapidly
As by the shore of the tempestuous sea
The dark steed bore me; and the mountain gray
Soon echoed to his hoofs, and I could see
Cythna among the rocks, where she alway
Had sate with anxious eyes fixed on the lingering day.

LIV

And joy was ours to meet. She was most pale,
Famished and wet and weary; so I cast
My arms around her, lest her steps should fail
As to our home we went, — and, thus embraced,
Her full heart seemed a deeper joy to taste
Than e’er the prosperous know; the steed behind
Trod peacefully along the mountain waste;
We reached our home ere morning could unbind
Night’s latest veil, and on our bridal couch reclined.

LV

Her chilled heart having cherished in my bosom,
And sweetest kisses past, we two did share
Our peaceful meal; as an autumnal blossom,
Which spreads its shrunk leaves in the sunny air
After cold showers, like rainbows woven there,

Thus in her lips and cheeks the vital spirit
Mantled, and in her eyes an atmosphere
Of health and hope; and sorrow languished near it,
And fear, and all that dark despondence doth inherit.

REVOLT OF ISLAM: Canto Seventh

I

SO we sate joyous as the morning ray
Which fed upon the wrecks of night and storm
Now lingering on the winds; light airs did play
Among the dewy weeds, the sun was warm,
And we sate linked in the inwoven charm
Of converse and caresses sweet and deep —
Speechless caresses, talk that might disarm
Time, though he wield the darts of death and sleep,
And those thrice mortal barbs in his own poison steep.

II

I told her of my sufferings and my madness,
And how, awakened from that dreamy mood
By Liberty's uprise, the strength of gladness
Came to my spirit in my solitude,
And all that now I was, while tears pursued
Each other down her fair and listening cheek
Fast as the thoughts which fed them, like a flood
From sunbright dales; and when I ceased to speak,
Her accents soft and sweet the pausing air did wake.

III

She told me a strange tale of strange endurance,
Like broken memories of many a heart
Woven into one; to which no firm assurance,
So wild were they, could her own faith impart.
She said that not a tear did dare to start
From the swoln brain, and that her thoughts were firm,
When from all mortal hope she did depart,
Borne by those slaves across the Ocean's term,
And that she reached the port without one fear infirm.

IV

One was she among many there, the thralls
Of the cold Tyrant's cruel lust; and they
Laughed mournfully in those polluted halls;
But she was calm and sad, musing alway
On loftiest enterprise, till on a day
The Tyrant heard her singing to her lute
A wild and sad and spirit-thrilling lay,
Like winds that die in wastes — one moment mute
The evil thoughts it made which did his breast pollute.

V

Even when he saw her wondrous loveliness,
One moment to great Nature's sacred power
He bent, and was no longer passionless;
But when he bade her to his secret bower
Be borne, a loveless victim, and she tore
Her locks in agony, and her words of flame
And mightier looks availed not, then he bore
Again his load of slavery, and became
A king, a heartless beast, a pageant and a name.

VI

She told me what a loathsome agony
Is that when selfishness mocks love's delight,
Foul as in dreams, most fearful imagery,
To dally with the mowing dead; that night
All torture, fear, or horror made seem light
Which the soul dreams or knows, and when the day
Shone on her awful frenzy, from the sight,
Where like a Spirit in fleshly chains she lay
Struggling, aghast and pale the Tyrant fled away.

VII

Her madness was a beam of light, a power
Which dawned through the rent soul; and words it gave,
Gestures and looks, such as in whirlwinds bore
(Which might not be withstood, whence none could save)
All who approached their sphere, like some calm wave
Vexed into whirlpools by the chasms beneath;
And sympathy made each attendant slave
Fearless and free, and they began to breathe
Deep curses, like the voice of flames far underneath.

VIII

The King felt pale upon his noon-day throne.
At night two slaves he to her chamber sent;
One was a green and wrinkled eunuch, grown
From human shape into an instrument
Of all things ill — distorted, bowed and bent;
The other was a wretch from infancy
Made dumb by poison; who nought knew or meant
But to obey; from the fire isles came he,
A diver lean and strong, of Oman's coral sea.

IX

They bore her to a bark, and the swift stroke
Of silent rowers clove the blue moonlight seas,
Until upon their path the morning broke;
They anchored then, where, be there calm or breeze,
The gloomiest of the drear Symplegades
Shakes with the sleepless surge; the Æthiop there
Wound his long arms around her, and with knees
Like iron clasped her feet, and plunged with her
Among the closing waves out of the boundless air.

X

'Swift as an eagle stooping from the plain
Of morning light into some shadowy wood,

He plunged through the green silence of the main,
Through many a cavern which the eternal flood
Had scooped as dark lairs for its monster brood;
And among mighty shapes which fled in wonder,
And among mightier shadows which pursued
His heels, he wound; until the dark rocks under
He touched a golden chain — a sound arose like thunder,

XI

'A stunning clang of massive bolts redoubling
Beneath the deep — a burst of waters driven
As from the roots of the sea, raging and bubbling:
And in that roof of crags a space was riven
Through which there shone the emerald beams of heaven,
Shot through the lines of many waves inwoven,
Like sunlight through acacia woods at even,
Through which his way the diver having cloven
Passed like a spark sent up out of a burning oven.

XII

'And then,' she said, 'he laid me in a cave
Above the waters, by that chasm of sea,
A fountain round and vast, in which the wave
Imprisoned, boiled and leaped perpetually,
Down which, one moment resting, he did flee,
Winning the adverse depth; that spacious cell
Like an hupaithric temple wide and high,
Whose aëry dome is inaccessible,
Was pierced with one round cleft through which the sunbeams fell.

XIII

'Below, the fountain's brink was richly paven
With the deep's wealth, coral, and pearl, and sand
Like spangling gold, and purple shells engraven
With mystic legends by no mortal hand,

Left there when, thronging to the moon's command,
The gathering waves rent the Hesperian gate
Of mountains; and on such bright floor did stand
Columns, and shapes like statues, and the state
Of kingless thrones, which Earth did in her heart create.

XIV

'The fiend of madness which had made its prey
Of my poor heart was lulled to sleep awhile.
There was an interval of many a day;
And a sea-eagle brought me food the while,
Whose nest was built in that untrodden isle,
And who to be the jailer had been taught
Of that strange dungeon; as a friend whose smile
Like light and rest at morn and even is sought
That wild bird was to me, till madness misery brought: —

XV

'The misery of a madness slow and creeping,
Which made the earth seem fire, the sea seem air,
And the white clouds of noon which oft were sleeping
In the blue heaven so beautiful and fair,
Like hosts of ghastly shadows hovering there;
And the sea-eagle looked a fiend who bore
Thy mangled limbs for food! — thus all things were
Transformed into the agony which I wore
Even as a poisoned robe around my bosom's core.

XVI

'Again I knew the day and night fast fleeing,
The eagle and the fountain and the air;
Another frenzy came — there seemed a being
Within me — a strange load my heart did bear,
As if some living thing had made its lair
Even in the fountains of my life; — a long

And wondrous vision wrought from my despair,
Then grew, like sweet reality among
Dim visionary woes, an unreposing throng.

XVII

‘Methought I was about to be a mother.
Month after month went by, and still I dreamed
That we should soon be all to one another,
I and my child; and still new pulses seemed
To beat beside my heart, and still I deemed
There was a babe within — and when the rain
Of winter through the rifted cavern streamed,
Methought, after a lapse of lingering pain,
I saw that lovely shape which near my heart had lain.

XVIII

‘It was a babe, beautiful from its birth, —
It was like thee, dear love! its eyes were thine,
Its brow, its lips, and so upon the earth
It laid its fingers as now rest on mine
Thine own, belovèd!—’t was a dream divine;
Even to remember how it fled, how swift,
How utterly, might make the heart repine, —
Though ‘t was a dream.’ — Then Cythna did uplift
Her looks on mine, as if some doubt she sought to shift —

XIX

A doubt which would not flee, a tenderness
Of questioning grief, a source of thronging tears;
Which having passed, as one whom sobs oppress
She spoke: ‘Yes, in the wilderness of years
Her memory aye like a green home appears.
She sucked her fill even at this breast, sweet love,
For many months. I had no mortal fears;

Methought I felt her lips and breath approve
It was a human thing which to my bosom clove.

XX

‘I watched the dawn of her first smiles; and soon
When zenith stars were trembling on the wave,
Or when the beams of the invisible moon
Or sun from many a prism within the cave
Their gem-born shadows to the water gave,
Her looks would hunt them, and with outspread hand,
From the swift lights which might that fountain pave,
She would mark one, and laugh when, that command
Slighting, it lingered there, and could not understand.

XXI

‘Methought her looks began to talk with me;
And no articulate sounds, but something sweet
Her lips would frame, — so sweet it could not be
That it was meaningless; her touch would meet
Mine, and our pulses calmly flow and beat
In response while we slept; and, on a day
When I was happiest in that strange retreat,
With heaps of golden shells we two did play —
Both infants, weaving wings for time’s perpetual way.

XXII

‘Ere night, methought, her waning eyes were grown
Weary with joy — and, tired with our delight,
We, on the earth, like sister twins lay down
On one fair mother’s bosom: — from that night
She fled, — like those illusions clear and bright,
Which dwell in lakes, when the red moon on high
Pause ere it wakens tempest; and her flight,
Though ‘t was the death of brainless fantasy,
Yet smote my lonesome heart more than all misery.

XXIII

‘It seemed that in the dreary night the diver
Who brought me thither came again, and bore
My child away. I saw the waters quiver,
When he so swiftly sunk, as once before;
Then morning came — it shone even as of yore,
But I was changed — the very life was gone
Out of my heart — I wasted more and more,
Day after day, and, sitting there alone,
Vexed the inconstant waves with my perpetual moan.

XXIV

‘I was no longer mad, and yet methought
My breasts were swoln and changed: — in every vein
The blood stood still one moment, while that thought
Was passing — with a gush of sickening pain
It ebbed even to its withered springs again;
When my wan eyes in stern resolve I turned
From that most strange delusion, which would fain
Have waked the dream for which my spirit yearned
With more than human love, — then left it unreturned.

XXV

‘So now my reason was restored to me
I struggled with that dream, which like a beast
Most fierce and beauteous in my memory
Had made its lair, and on my heart did feast;
But all that cave and all its shapes, possessed
By thoughts which could not fade, renewed each one
Some smile, some look, some gesture which had blessed
Me heretofore; I, sitting there alone,
Vexed the inconstant waves with my perpetual moan.

XXVI

‘Time passed, I know not whether months or years;
For day, nor night, nor change of seasons made
Its note, but thoughts and unavailing tears;
And I became at last even as a shade,
A smoke, a cloud on which the winds have preyed,
Till it be thin as air; until, one even,
A Nautilus upon the fountain played,
Spreading his azure sail where breath of heaven
Descended not, among the waves and whirlpools driven.

XXVII

‘And when the Eagle came, that lovely thing,
Oaring with rosy feet its silver boat,
Fled near me as for shelter; on slow wing
The Eagle hovering o’er his prey did float;
But when he saw that I with fear did note
His purpose, proffering my own food to him,
The eager plumes subsided on his throat —
He came where that bright child of sea did swim,
And o’er it cast in peace his shadow broad and dim.

XXVIII

‘This wakened me, it gave me human strength;
And hope, I know not whence or wherefore, rose,
But I resumed my ancient powers at length;
My spirit felt again like one of those,
Like thine, whose fate it is to make the woes
Of humankind their prey. What was this cave?
Its deep foundation no firm purpose knows
Immutable, resistless, strong to save,
Like mind while yet it mocks the all-devouring grave.

XXIX

‘And where was Laon? might my heart be dead,
While that far dearer heart could move and be?

Or whilst over the earth the pall was spread
Which I had sworn to rend? I might be free,
Could I but win that friendly bird to me
To bring me ropes; and long in vain I sought
By intercourse of mutual imagery
Of objects if such aid he could be taught;
But fruit and flowers and boughs, yet never ropes he brought.

XXX

‘We live in our own world, and mine was made
From glorious fantasies of hope departed;
Aye we are darkened with their floating shade,
Or cast a lustre on them; time imparted
Such power to me — I became fearless-hearted,
My eye and voice grew firm, calm was my mind,
And piercing, like the morn, now it has darted
Its lustre on all hidden things behind
Yon dim and fading clouds which load the weary wind.

XXXI

‘My mind became the book through which I grew
Wise in all human wisdom, and its cave,
Which like a mine I rifled through and through,
To me the keeping of its secrets gave —
One mind, the type of all, the moveless wave
Whose calm reflects all moving things that are,
Necessity, and love, and life, the grave,
And sympathy, fountains of hope and fear,
Justice, and truth, and time, and the world’s natural sphere.

XXXII

‘And on the sand would I make signs to range
These woofs, as they were woven, of my thought;
Clear elemental shapes, whose smallest change
A subtler language within language wrought —

The key of truths which once were dimly taught
In old Crotona; and sweet melodies
Of love in that lorn solitude I caught
From mine own voice in dream, when thy dear eyes
Shone through my sleep, and did that utterance harmonize.

XXXIII

‘Thy songs were winds whereon I fled at will,
As in a wingèd chariot, o’er the plain
Of crystal youth; and thou wert there to fill
My heart with joy, and there we sate again
On the gray margin of the glimmering main,
Happy as then but wiser far, for we
Smiled on the flowery grave in which were lain
Fear, Faith and Slavery: and mankind was free,
Equal, and pure, and wise, in Wisdom’s prophecy.

XXXIV

‘For to my will my fancies were as slaves
To do their sweet and subtle ministries;
And oft from that bright fountain’s shadowy waves
They would make human throngs gather and rise
To combat with my overflowing eyes
And voice made deep with passion; — thus I grew
Familiar with the shock and the surprise
And war of earthly minds, from which I drew
The power which has been mine to frame their thoughts anew.

XXXV

‘And thus my prison was the populous earth,
Where I saw — even as misery dreams of morn
Before the east has given its glory birth —
Religion’s pomp made desolate by the scorn
Of Wisdom’s faintest smile, and thrones uptorn,
And dwellings of mild people interspersed

With undivided fields of ripening corn,
And love made free — a hope which we have nursed
Even with our blood and tears, — until its glory burst.

XXXVI

‘All is not lost! There is some recompense
For hope whose fountain can be thus profound, —
Even thronèd Evil’s splendid impotence
Girt by its hell of power, the secret sound
Of hymns to truth and freedom, the dread bound
Of life and death passed fearlessly and well,
Dungeons wherein the high resolve is found,
Racks which degraded woman’s greatness tell,
And what may else be good and irresistible.

XXXVII

‘Such are the thoughts which, like the fires that flare
In storm-encompassed isles, we cherish yet
In this dark ruin — such were mine even there;
As in its sleep some odorous violet,
While yet its leaves with nightly dews are wet,
Breathes in prophetic dreams of day’s uprise,
Or as, ere Scythian frost in fear has met
Spring’s messengers descending from the skies,
The buds foreknow their life — this hope must ever rise.

XXXVIII

‘So years had passed, when sudden earthquake rent
The depth of Ocean, and the cavern cracked
With sound, as if the world’s wide continent
Had fallen in universal ruin wracked,
And through the cleft streamed in one cataract
The stifling waters: — when I woke, the flood
Whose banded waves that crystal cave had sacked

Was ebbing round me, and my bright abode
Before me yawned — a chasm desert, and bare, and broad.

XXXIX

‘Above me was the sky, beneath the sea;
I stood upon a point of shattered stone,
And heard loose rocks rushing tumultuously
With splash and shock into the deep — anon
All ceased, and there was silence wide and lone.
I felt that I was free! The Ocean spray
Quivered beneath my feet, the broad Heaven shone
Around, and in my hair the winds did play
Lingering as they pursued their unimpeded way.

XL

‘My spirit moved upon the sea like wind
Which round some thymy cape will lag and hover,
Though it can wake the still cloud, and unbind
The strength of tempest. Day was almost over,
When through the fading light I could discover
A ship approaching — its white sails were fed
With the north wind — its moving shade did cover
The twilight deep; the mariners in dread
Cast anchor when they saw new rocks around them spread.

XLI

‘And when they saw one sitting on a crag,
They sent a boat to me; the sailors rowed
In awe through many a new and fearful jag
Of overhanging rock, through which there flowed
The foam of streams that cannot make abode.
They came and questioned me, but when they heard
My voice, they became silent, and they stood
And moved as men in whom new love had stirred
Deep thoughts; so to the ship we passed without a word.

REVOLT OF ISLAM: Canto Eighth

I

'I SATE beside the steersman then, and gazing
Upon the west cried, "Spread the sails! behold!
The sinking moon is like a watch-tower blazing
Over the mountains yet; the City of Gold
Yon Cape alone does from the sight withhold;
The stream is fleet — the north breathes steadily
Beneath the stars; they tremble with the cold!
Ye cannot rest upon the dreary sea! —
Haste, haste to the warm home of happier destiny!"

II

'The Mariners obeyed; the Captain stood
Aloof, and whispering to the Pilot said,
"Alas, alas! I fear we are pursued
By wicked ghosts; a Phantom of the Dead,
The night before we sailed, came to my bed
In dream, like that!" The Pilot then replied,
"It cannot be — she is a human maid —
Her low voice makes you weep — she is some bride,
Or daughter of high birth — she can be nought beside."

III

'We passed the islets, borne by wind and stream,
And as we sailed the Mariners came near
And thronged around to listen; in the gleam
Of the pale moon I stood, as one whom fear
May not attaint, and my calm voice did rear:
"Ye are all human — yon broad moon gives light
To millions who the self-same likeness wear,
Even while I speak — beneath this very night,
Their thoughts flow on like ours, in sadness or delight.

IV

‘“What dream ye? Your own hands have built an home
Even for yourselves on a belovèd shore;
For some, fond eyes are pining till they come —
How they will greet him when his toils are o’er,
And laughing babes rush from the well-known door!
Is this your care? ye toil for your own good —
Ye feel and think — has some immortal power
Such purposes? or in a human mood
Dream ye some Power thus builds for man in solitude?

V

‘“What is that Power? Ye mock yourselves, and give
A human heart to what ye cannot know:
As if the cause of life could think and live!
‘T were as if man’s own works should feel, and show
The hopes and fears and thoughts from which they flow,
And he be like to them. Lo! Plague is free
To waste, Blight, Poison, Earthquake, Hail, and Snow,
Disease, and Want, and worse Necessity
Of hate and ill, and Pride, and Fear, and Tyranny.

VI

‘“What is that Power? Some moonstruck sophist stood,
Watching the shade from his own soul upthrown
Fill Heaven and darken Earth, and in such mood
The Form he saw and worshipped was his own,
His likeness in the world’s vast mirror shown;
And ‘t were an innocent dream, but that a faith
Nursed by fear’s dew of poison grows thereon,
And that men say that Power has chosen Death
On all who scorn its laws to wreak immortal wrath.

VII

‘“Men say that they themselves have heard and seen,
Or known from others who have known such things,
A Shade, a Form, which Earth and Heaven between
Wields an invisible rod — that Priests and Kings,
Custom, domestic sway, ay, all that brings
Man’s free-born soul beneath the oppressor’s heel,
Are his strong ministers, and that the stings
Of death will make the wise his vengeance feel,
Though truth and virtue arm their hearts with tenfold steel.

VIII

‘“And it is said this Power will punish wrong;
Yes, add despair to crime, and pain to pain!
And deepest hell, and deathless snakes among,
Will bind the wretch on whom is fixed a stain,
Which, like a plague, a burden, and a bane,
Clung to him while he lived; for love and hate,
Virtue and vice, they say, are difference vain —
The will of strength is right. This human state
Tyrants, that they may rule, with lies thus desolate.

IX

‘“Alas, what strength? Opinion is more frail
Than yon dim cloud now fading on the moon
Even while we gaze, though it awhile avail
To hide the orb of truth — and every throne
Of Earth or Heaven, though shadow, rests thereon,
One shape of many names: — for this ye plough
The barren waves of Ocean — hence each one
Is slave or tyrant; all betray and bow,
Command, or kill, or fear, or wreak or suffer woe.

X

‘“Its names are each a sign which maketh holy
All power — ay, the ghost, the dream, the shade

Of power — lust, falsehood, hate, and pride, and folly;
The pattern whence all fraud and wrong is made,
A law to which mankind has been betrayed;
And human love is as the name well known
Of a dear mother whom the murderer laid
In bloody grave, and, into darkness thrown,
Gathered her wildered babes around him as his own.

XI

‘“O Love, who to the hearts of wandering men
Art as the calm to Ocean’s weary waves!
Justice, or Truth, or Joy! those only can
From slavery and religion’s labyrinth-caves
Guide us, as one clear star the seaman saves.
To give to all an equal share of good,
To track the steps of Freedom, though through graves
She pass, to suffer all in patient mood,
To weep for crime though stained with thy friend’s dearest blood,

XII

‘“To feel the peace of self-contentment’s lot,
To own all sympathies, and outrage none,
And in the inmost bowers of sense and thought,
Until life’s sunny day is quite gone down,
To sit and smile with Joy, or, not alone,
To kiss salt tears from the worn cheek of Woe;
To live as if to love and live were one, —
This is not faith or law, nor those who bow
To thrones on Heaven or Earth such destiny may know.

XIII

‘“But children near their parents tremble now,
Because they must obey; one rules another,
And, as one Power rules both high and low,
So man is made the captive of his brother,

And Hate is throned on high with Fear his mother
Above the Highest; and those fountain-cells,
Whence love yet flowed when faith had choked all other,
Are darkened — Woman as the bond-slave dwells
Of man, a slave; and life is poisoned in its wells.

XIV

‘“Man seeks for gold in mines that he may weave
A lasting chain for his own slavery;
In fear and restless care that he may live
He toils for others who must ever be
The joyless thralls of like captivity;
He murders, for his chiefs delight in ruin;
He builds the altar that its idol’s fee
May be his very blood; he is pursuing —
Oh, blind and willing wretch! — his own obscure undoing.

XV

‘“Woman! — she is his slave, she has become
A thing I weep to speak — the child of scorn,
The outcast of a desolated home;
Falsehood, and fear, and toil, like waves have worn
Channels upon her cheek, which smiles adorn
As calm decks the false Ocean: — well ye know
What Woman is, for none of Woman born
Can choose but drain the bitter dregs of woe,
Which ever from the oppressed to the oppressors flow.

XVI

‘“This need not be; ye might arise, and will
That gold should lose its power, and thrones their glory;
That love, which none may bind, be free to fill
The world, like light; and evil faith, grown hoary
With crime, be quenched and die. — Yon promontory
Even now eclipses the descending moon! —

Dungeons and palaces are transitory —
High temples fade like vapor — Man alone
Remains, whose will has power when all beside is gone.

XVII

‘“Let all be free and equal! — from your hearts
I feel an echo; through my inmost frame
Like sweetest sound, seeking its mate, it darts.
Whence come ye, friends? Alas, I cannot name
All that I read of sorrow, toil and shame
On your worn faces; as in legends old
Which make immortal the disastrous fame
Of conquerors and impostors false and bold,
The discord of your hearts I in your looks behold.

XVIII

‘“Whence come ye, friends? from pouring human blood
Forth on the earth? or bring ye steel and gold,
That kings may dupe and slay the multitude?
Or from the famished poor, pale, weak and cold,
Bear ye the earnings of their toil? unfold!
Speak! are your hands in slaughter’s sanguine hue
Stained freshly? have your hearts in guile grown old?
Know yourselves thus! ye shall be pure as dew,
And I will be a friend and sister unto you.

XIX

‘“Disguise it not — we have one human heart —
All mortal thoughts confess a common home;
Blush not for what may to thyself impart
Stains of inevitable crime; the doom
Is this, which has, or may, or must, become
Thine, and all humankind’s. Ye are the spoil
Which Time thus marks for the devouring tomb —

Thou and thy thoughts, and they, and all the toil
Wherewith ye twine the rings of life's perpetual coil.

XX

‘“Disguise it not — ye blush for what ye hate,
And Enmity is sister unto Shame;
Look on your mind — it is the book of fate —
Ah! it is dark with many a blazoned name
Of misery — all are mirrors of the same;
But the dark fiend who with his iron pen,
Dipped in scorn's fiery poison, makes his fame
Enduring there, would o'er the heads of men
Pass harmless, if they scorned to make their hearts his den.

XXI

‘“Yes, it is Hate, that shapeless fiendly thing
Of many names, all evil, some divine,
Whom self-contempt arms with a mortal sting;
Which, when the heart its snaky folds entwine,
Is wasted quite, and when it doth repine
To gorge such bitter prey, on all beside
It turns with ninefold rage, as with its twine
When Amphisbæna some fair bird has tied,
Soon o'er the putrid mass he threats on every side.

XXII

‘“Reproach not thine own soul, but know thyself,
Nor hate another's crime, nor loathe thine own.
It is the dark idolatry of self,
Which, when our thoughts and actions once are gone,
Demands that man should weep, and bleed, and groan;
Oh, vacant expiation! be at rest!
The past is Death's, the future is thine own;
And love and joy can make the foulest breast
A paradise of flowers, where peace might build her nest.

XXIII

‘“Speak thou! whence come ye?” — A youth made reply, —
“Wearily, wearily o’er the boundless deep
We sail; thou readest well the misery
Told in these faded eyes, but much doth sleep
Within, which there the poor heart loves to keep,
Or dare not write on the dishonored brow;
Even from our childhood have we learned to steep
The bread of slavery in the tears of woe,
And never dreamed of hope or refuge until now.

XXIV

‘“Yes — I must speak — my secret should have perished
Even with the heart it wasted, as a brand
Fades in the dying flame whose life it cherished,
But that no human bosom can withstand
Thee, wondrous Lady, and the mild command
Of thy keen eyes: — yes, we are wretched slaves,
Who from their wonted loves and native land
Are reft, and bear o’er the dividing waves
The unregarded prey of calm and happy graves.

XXV

‘“We drag afar from pastoral vales the fairest
Among the daughters of those mountains lone;
We drag them there where all things best and rarest
Are stained and trampled; years have come and gone
Since, like the ship which bears me, I have known
No thought; but now the eyes of one dear maid
On mine with light of mutual love have shone —
She is my life — I am but as the shade
Of her — a smoke sent up from ashes, soon to fade! —

XXVI

‘“For she must perish in the Tyrant’s hall —
Alas, alas!” — He ceased, and by the sail
Sat cowering — but his sobs were heard by all,
And still before the Ocean and the gale
The ship fled fast till the stars ‘gan to fail;
And, round me gathered with mute countenance,
The Seamen gazed, the Pilot, worn and pale
With toil, the Captain with gray locks whose glance
Met mine in restless awe — they stood as in a trance.

XXVII

‘“Recede not! pause not now! thou art grown old,
But Hope will make thee young, for Hope and Youth
Are children of one mother, even Love — behold!
The eternal stars gaze on us! — is the truth
Within your soul? care for your own, or ruth
For others’ sufferings? do ye thirst to bear
A heart which not the serpent Custom’s tooth
May violate? — be free! and even here,
Swear to be firm till death!” — they cried, “We swear! we swear!”

XXVIII

‘The very darkness shook, as with a blast
Of subterranean thunder, at the cry;
The hollow shore its thousand echoes cast
Into the night, as if the sea and sky
And earth rejoiced with new-born liberty,
For in that name they swore! Bolts were undrawn,
And on the deck with unaccustomed eye
The captives gazing stood, and every one
Shrank as the inconstant torch upon her countenance shone.

XXIX

‘They were earth’s purest children, young and fair,
With eyes the shrines of unawakened thought,

And brows as bright as spring or morning, ere
Dark time had there its evil legend wrought
In characters of cloud which wither not.
The change was like a dream to them; but soon
They knew the glory of their altered lot —
In the bright wisdom of youth's breathless noon,
Sweet talk and smiles and sighs all bosoms did attune.

XXX

'But one was mute; her cheeks and lips most fair,
Changing their hue like lilies newly blown
Beneath a bright acacia's shadowy hair
Waved by the wind amid the sunny noon,
Showed that her soul was quivering; and full soon
That youth arose, and breathlessly did look
On her and me, as for some speechless boon;
I smiled, and both their hands in mine I took,
And felt a soft delight from what their spirits shook.

REVOLT OF ISLAM: Canto Ninth

I

‘THAT night we anchored in a woody bay,
And sleep no more around ns dared to hover
Than, when all doubt and fear has passed away,
It shades the couch of some unresting lover
Whose heart is now at rest; thus night passed over
In mutual joy; around, a forest grew
Of poplars and dark oaks, whose shade did cover
The waning stars pranked in the waters blue,
And trembled in the wind which from the morning flew.

II

‘The joyous mariners and each free maiden
Now brought from the deep forest many a bough,
With woodland spoil most innocently laden;
Soon wreaths of budding foliage seemed to flow
Over the mast and sails; the stern and prow
Were canopied with blooming boughs; the while
On the slant sun’s path o’er the waves we go
Rejoicing, like the dwellers of an isle
Doomed to pursue those waves that cannot cease to smile.

III

‘The many ships spotting the dark blue deep
With snowy sails, fled fast as ours came nigh,
In fear and wonder; and on every steep
Thousands did gaze. They heard the startling cry,
Like earth’s own voice lifted unconquerably
To all her children, the unbounded mirth,
The glorious joy of thy name — Liberty!
They heard! — As o’er the mountains of the earth
From peak to peak leap on the beams of morning’s birth,

IV

‘So from that cry over the boundless hills
Sudden was caught one universal sound,
Like a volcano’s voice whose thunder fills
Remotest skies, — such glorious madness found
A path through human hearts with stream which drowned
Its struggling fears and cares, dark Custom’s brood;
They knew not whence it came, but felt around
A wide contagion poured — they called aloud
On Liberty — that name lived on the sunny flood.

V

‘We reached the port. Alas! from many spirits
The wisdom which had waked that cry was fled,
Like the brief glory which dark Heaven inherits
From the false dawn, which fades ere it is spread,
Upon the night’s devouring darkness shed;
Yet soon bright day will burst — even like a chasm
Of fire, to burn the shrouds outworn and dead
Which wrap the world; a wide enthusiasm,
To cleanse the fevered world as with an earthquake’s spasm!

VI

‘I walked through the great City then, but free
From shame or fear; those toil-worn mariners
And happy maidens did encompass me;
And like a subterranean wind that stirs
Some forest among caves, the hopes and fears
From every human soul a murmur strange
Made as I passed; and many wept with tears
Of joy and awe, and wingèd thoughts did range,
And half-extinguished words which prophesied of change.

VII

‘For with strong speech I tore the veil that hid
Nature, and Truth, and Liberty, and Love, —
As one who from some mountain’s pyramid
Points to the unrisen sun! the shades approve
His truth, and flee from every stream and grove.
Thus, gentle thoughts did many a bosom fill,
Wisdom the mail of tried affections wove
For many a heart, and tameless scorn of ill
Thrice steeped in molten steel the unconquerable will.

VIII

‘Some said I was a maniac wild and lost;
Some, that I scarce had risen from the grave
The Prophet’s virgin bride, a heavenly ghost;
Some said I was a fiend from my weird cave,
Who had stolen human shape, and o’er the wave,
The forest, and the mountain, came; some said
I was the child of God, sent down to save
Woman from bonds and death, and on my head
The burden of their sins would frightfully be laid.

IX

‘But soon my human words found sympathy
In human hearts; the purest and the best,
As friend with friend, made common cause with me,
And they were few, but resolute; the rest,
Ere yet success the enterprise had blessed,
Leagued with me in their hearts; their meals, their slumber,
Their hourly occupations, were possessed
By hopes which I had armed to overnumber
Those hosts of meaner cares which life’s strong wings encumber.

X

‘But chiefly women, whom my voice did waken
From their cold, careless, willing slavery,

Sought me; one truth their dreary prison has shaken,
They looked around, and lo! they became free!
Their many tyrants, sitting desolately
In slave-deserted halls, could none restrain;
For wrath's red fire had withered in the eye
Whose lightning once was death, — nor fear nor gain
Could tempt one captive now to lock another's chain.

XI

'Those who were sent to bind me wept, and felt
Their minds outsoar the bonds which clasped them round,
Even as a waxen shape may waste and melt
In the white furnace; and a visioned swound,
A pause of hope and awe, the City bound,
Which, like the silence of a tempest's birth,
When in its awful shadow it has wound
The sun, the wind, the ocean, and the earth,
Hung terrible, ere yet the lightnings have leaped forth.

XII

'Like clouds inwoven in the silent sky
By winds from distant regions meeting there,
In the high name of Truth and Liberty
Around the City millions gathered were
By hopes which sprang from many a hidden lair, —
Words which the lore of truth in hues of grace
Arrayed, thine own wild songs which in the air
Like homeless odors floated, and the name
Of thee, and many a tongue which thou hadst dipped in flame.

XIII

'The Tyrant knew his power was gone, but Fear,
The nurse of Vengeance, bade him wait the event —
That perfidy and custom, gold and prayer,
And whatsoe'er, when Force is impotent,

To Fraud the sceptre of the world has lent,
Might, as he judged, confirm his failing sway.
Therefore throughout the streets, the Priests he sent
To curse the rebels. To their gods did they
For Earthquake, Plague and Want, kneel in the public way.

XIV

'And grave and hoary men were bribed to tell,
From seats where law is made the slave of wrong,
How glorious Athens in her splendor fell,
Because her sons were free, — and that among
Mankind, the many to the few belong
By Heaven, and Nature, and Necessity.
They said, that age was truth, and that the young
Marred with wild hopes the peace of slavery,
With which old times and men had quelled the vain and free.

XV

'And with the falsehood of their poisonous lips
They breathed on the enduring memory
Of sages and of bards a brief eclipse.
There was one teacher, who necessity
Had armed with strength and wrong against mankind,
His slave and his avenger aye to be;
That we were weak and sinful, frail and blind,
And that the will of one was peace, and we
Should seek for nought on earth but toil and misery —

XVI

'"For thus we might avoid the hell hereafter."
So spake the hypocrites, who cursed and lied.
Alas, their sway was passed, and tears and laughter
Clung to their hoary hair, withering the pride
Which in their hollow hearts dared still abide;
And yet obscener slaves with smoother brow,

And sneers on their strait lips, thin, blue and wide,
Said that the rule of men was over now,
And hence the subject world to woman's will must bow.

XVII

'And gold was scattered through the streets, and wine
Flowed at a hundred feasts within the wall.
In vain! the steady towers in Heaven did shine
As they were wont, nor at the priestly call
Left Plague her banquet in the Æthiop's hall,
Nor Famine from the rich man's portal came,
Where at her ease she ever preys on all
Who throng to kneel for food; nor fear, nor shame,
Nor faith, nor discord, dimmed hope's newly kindled flame.

XVIII

'For gold was as a god whose faith began
To fade, so that its worshippers were few;
And Faith itself, which in the heart of man
Gives shape, voice, name, to spectral Terror, knew
Its downfall, as the altars lonelier grew,
Till the Priests stood alone within the fane;
The shafts of falsehood unpolluting flew,
And the cold sneers of calumny were vain
The union of the free with discord's brand to stain.

XIX

'The rest thou knowest. — Lo! we two are here —
We have survived a ruin wide and deep —
Strange thoughts are mine. I cannot grieve or fear.
Sitting with thee upon this lonely steep
I smile, though human love should make me weep.
We have survived a joy that knows no sorrow,
And I do feel a mighty calmness creep

Over my heart, which can no longer borrow
Its hues from chance or change, dark children of to-morrow.

XX

‘We know not what will come. Yet, Laon, dearest,
Cythna shall be the prophetess of Love;
Her lips shall rob thee of the grace thou wearest,
To hide thy heart, and clothe the shapes which rove
Within the homeless Future’s wintry grove;
For I now, sitting thus beside thee, seem
Even with thy breath and blood to live and move,
And violence and wrong are as a dream
Which rolls from steadfast truth, — an unreturning stream.

XXI

‘The blasts of Autumn drive the wingèd seeds
Over the earth; next come the snows, and rain,
And frosts, and storms, which dreary Winter leads
Out of his Scythian cave, a savage train.
Behold! Spring sweeps over the world again,
Shedding soft dews from her ethereal wings;
Flowers on the mountains, fruits over the plain,
And music on the waves and woods she flings,
And love on all that lives, and calm on lifeless things.

XXII

‘O Spring, of hope and love and youth and gladness
Wind-wingèd emblem! brightest, best and fairest!
Whence comest thou, when, with dark Winter’s sadness
The tears that fade in sunny smiles thou sharest?
Sister of joy! thou art the child who wearest
Thy mother’s dying smile, tender and sweet;
Thy mother Autumn, for whose grave thou bearest
Fresh flowers, and beams like flowers, with gentle feet,
Disturbing not the leaves which are her winding sheet.

XXIII

‘Virtue and Hope and Love, like light and Heaven,
Surround the world. We are their chosen slaves.
Has not the whirlwind of our spirit driven
Truth’s deathless germs to thought’s remotest caves?
Lo, Winter comes! — the grief of many graves,
The frost of death, the tempest of the sword,
The flood of tyranny, whose sanguine waves
Stagnate like ice at Faith the enchanter’s word,
And bind all human hearts in its repose abhorred.

XXIV

‘The seeds are sleeping in the soil. Meanwhile
The Tyrant peoples dungeons with his prey;
Pale victims on the guarded scaffold smile
Because they cannot speak; and, day by day,
The moon of wasting Science wanes away
Among her stars, and in that darkness vast
The sons of earth to their foul idols pray,
And gray Priests triumph, and like blight or blast
A shade of selfish care o’er human looks is cast.

XXV

‘This is the Winter of the world; and here
We die, even as the winds of Autumn fade,
Expiring in the frore and foggy air.
Behold! Spring comes, though we must pass who made
The promise of its birth, — even as the shade
Which from our death, as from a mountain, flings
The future, a broad sunrise; thus arrayed
As with the plumes of overshadowing wings,
From its dark gulf of chains Earth like an eagle springs.

XXVI

‘O dearest love! we shall be dead and cold
Before this morn may on the world arise.
Wouldst thou the glory of its dawn behold?
Alas! gaze not on me, but turn thine eyes
On thine own heart — it is a Paradise
Which everlasting spring has made its own,
And while drear winter fills the naked skies,
Sweet streams of sunny thought, and flowers fresh blown,
Are there, and weave their sounds and odors into one.

XXVII

‘In their own hearts the earnest of the hope
Which made them great the good will ever find;
And though some envious shade may interlope
Between the effect and it, One comes behind,
Who aye the future to the past will bind —
Necessity, whose sightless strength forever
Evil with evil, good with good, must wind
In bands of union, which no power may sever;
They must bring forth their kind, and be divided never!

XXVIII

‘The good and mighty of departed ages
Are in their graves, the innocent and free,
Heroes, and Poets, and prevailing Sages,
Who leave the vesture of their majesty
To adorn and clothe this naked world; — and we
Are like to them — such perish, but they leave
All hope, or love, or truth, or liberty,
Whose forms their mighty spirits could conceive,
To be a rule and law to ages that survive.

XXIX

‘So be the turf heaped over our remains
Even in our happy youth, and that strange lot,

Whate'er it be, when in these mingling veins
The blood is still, be ours; let sense and thought
Pass from our being, or be numbered not
Among the things that are; let those who come
Behind, for whom our steadfast will has bought
A calm inheritance, a glorious doom,
Insult with careless tread our undivided tomb.

XXX

'Our many thoughts and deeds, our life and love,
Our happiness, and all that we have been,
Immortally must live and burn and move
When we shall be no more; — the world has seen
A type of peace; and as some most serene
And lovely spot to a poor maniac's eye —
After long years some sweet and moving scene
Of youthful hope returning suddenly —
Quells his long madness, thus Man shall remember thee.

XXXI

'And Calumny meanwhile shall feed on us
As worms devour the dead, and near the throne
And at the altar most accepted thus
Shall sneers and curses be; — what we have done
None shall dare vouch, though it be truly known;
That record shall remain when they must pass
Who built their pride on its oblivion,
And fame, in human hope which sculptured was,
Survive the perished scrolls of unenduring brass.

XXXII

'The while we two, belovèd, must depart,
And Sense and Reason, those enchanters fair,
Whose wand of power is hope, would bid the heart
That gazed beyond the wormy grave despair;

These eyes, these lips, this blood, seems darkly there
To fade in hideous ruin; no calm sleep,
Peopling with golden dreams the stagnant air,
Seems our obscure and rotting eyes to steep
In joy; — but senseless death — a ruin dark and deep!

XXXIII

'These are blind fancies. Reason cannot know
What sense can neither feel nor thought conceive;
There is delusion in the world — and woe,
And fear, and pain — we know not whence we live,
Or why, or how, or what mute Power may give
Their being to each plant, and star, and beast,
Or even these thoughts. — Come near me! I do weave
A chain I cannot break — I am possessed
With thoughts too swift and strong for one lone human breast.

XXXIV

'Yes, yes — thy kiss is sweet, thy lips are warm —
Oh, willingly, belovèd, would these eyes
Might they no more drink being from thy form,
Even as to sleep whence we again arise,
Close their faint orbs in death. I fear nor prize
Aught that can now betide, unshared by thee.
Yes, Love when Wisdom fails makes Cythna wise;
Darkness and death, if death be true, must be
Dearer than life and hope if unenjoyed with thee.

XXXV

'Alas! our thoughts flow on with stream whose waters
Return not to their fountain; Earth and Heaven,
The Ocean and the Sun, the clouds their daughters,
Winter, and Spring, and Morn, and Noon, and Even —
All that we are or know, is darkly driven
Towards one gulf. — Lo! what a change is come

Since I first spake — but time shall be forgiven,
Though it change all but thee!' She ceased — night's gloom
Meanwhile had fallen on earth from the sky's sunless dome.

XXXVI

Though she had ceased, her countenance uplifted
To Heaven still spake with solemn glory bright;
Her dark deep eyes, her lips, whose motions gifted
The air they breathed with love, her locks undight;
'Fair star of life and love,' I cried, 'my soul's delight,
Why lookest thou on the crystalline skies?
Oh, that my spirit were yon Heaven of night,
Which gazes on thee with its thousand eyes!'
She turned to me and smiled — that smile was Paradise!

REVOLT OF ISLAM: Canto Tenth

I

WAS there a human spirit in the steed
That thus with his proud voice, ere night was gone,
He broke our linkèd rest? or do indeed
All living things a common nature own,
And thought erect an universal throne,
Where many shapes one tribute ever bear?
And Earth, their mutual mother, does she groan
To see her sons contend? and makes she bare
Her breast that all in peace its drainless stores may share?

II

I have heard friendly sounds from many a tongue
Which was not human; the lone nightingale
Has answered me with her most soothing song,
Out of her ivy bower, when I sate pale
With grief, and sighed beneath; from many a dale
The antelopes who flocked for food have spoken
With happy sounds and motions that avail
Like man's own speech; and such was now the token
Of waning night, whose calm by that proud neigh was broken.

III

Each night that mighty steed bore me abroad,
And I returned with food to our retreat,
And dark intelligence; the blood which flowed
Over the fields had stained the courser's feet;
Soon the dust drinks that bitter dew, — then meet
The vulture, and the wild-dog, and the snake,
The wolf, and the hyena gray, and eat
The dead in horrid truce; their throngs did make
Behind the steed a chasm like waves in a ship's wake.

IV

For from the utmost realms of earth came pouring
The banded slaves whom every despot sent
At that throned traitor's summons; like the roaring
Of fire, whose floods the wild deer circumvent
In the scorched pastures of the south, so bent
The armies of the leaguèd kings around
Their files of steel and flame; the continent
Trembled, as with a zone of ruin bound,
Beneath their feet — the sea shook with their Navies' sound.

V

From every nation of the earth they came,
The multitude of moving heartless things,
Whom slaves call men; obediently they came,
Like sheep whom from the fold the shepherd brings
To the stall, red with blood; their many kings
Led them, thus erring, from their native land —
Tartar and Frank, and millions whom the wings
Of Indian breezes lull; and many a band
The Arctic Anarch sent, and Idumea's sand

VI

Fertile in prodigies and lies. So there
Strange natures made a brotherhood of ill.
The desert savage ceased to grasp in fear
His Asian shield and bow when, at the will
Of Europe's subtler son, the bolt would kill
Some shepherd sitting on a rock secure;
But smiles of wondering joy his face would fill,
And savage sympathy; those slaves impure
Each one the other thus from ill to ill did lure.

VII

For traitorously did that foul Tyrant robe
His countenance in lies; even at the hour
When he was snatched from death, then o'er the globe,
With secret signs from many a mountain tower,
With smoke by day, and fire by night, the power
Of Kings and Priests, those dark conspirators,
He called; they knew his cause their own, and swore
Like wolves and serpents to their mutual wars
Strange truce, with many a rite which Earth and Heaven abhors.

VIII

Myriads had come — millions were on their way;
The Tyrant passed, surrounded by the steel
Of hired assassins, through the public way,
Choked with his country's dead; his footsteps reel
On the fresh blood — he smiles. 'Ay, now I feel
I am a King in truth!' he said, and took
His royal seat, and bade the torturing wheel
Be brought, and fire, and pincers, and the hook,
And scorpions, that his soul on its revenge might look.

IX

'But first, go slay the rebels — why return
The victor bands?' he said, 'millions yet live,
Of whom the weakest with one word might turn
The scales of victory yet; let none survive
But those within the walls — each fifth shall give
The expiation for his brethren here.
Go forth, and waste and kill!'—'O king, forgive
My speech,' a soldier answered, 'but we fear
The spirits of the night, and morn is drawing near;

X

'For we were slaying still without remorse,
And now that dreadful chief beneath my hand

Defenceless lay, when on a hell-black horse
An Angel bright as day, waving a brand
Which flashed among the stars, passed.'—'Dost thou stand
Parleying with me, thou wretch?' the king replied;
'Slaves, bind him to the wheel; and of this band
Whoso will drag that woman to his side
That scared him thus may burn his dearest foe beside;

XI

'And gold and glory shall be his. Go forth!'
They rushed into the plain. Loud was the roar
Of their career; the horsemen shook the earth;
The wheeled artillery's speed the pavement tore;
The infantry, file after file, did pour
Their clouds on the utmost hills. Five days they slew
Among the wasted fields; the sixth saw gore
Stream through the City; on the seventh the dew
Of slaughter became stiff, and there was peace anew:

XII

Peace in the desert fields and villages,
Between the glutted beasts and mangled dead!
Peace in the silent streets! save when the cries
Of victims, to their fiery judgment led,
Made pale their voiceless lips who seemed to dread,
Even in their dearest kindred, lest some tongue
Be faithless to the fear yet unbetrayed;
Peace in the Tyrant's palace, where the throng
Waste the triumphal hours in festival and song!

XIII

Day after day the burning Sun rolled on
Over the death-polluted land. It came
Out of the east like fire, and fiercely shone
A lamp of autumn, ripening with its flame

The few lone ears of corn; the sky became
Stagnate with heat, so that each cloud and blast
Languished and died; the thirsting air did claim
All moisture, and a rotting vapor passed
From the unburied dead, invisible and fast.

XIV

First Want, then Plague, came on the beasts; their food
Failed, and they drew the breath of its decay.
Millions on millions, whom the scent of blood
Had lured, or who from regions far away
Had tracked the hosts in festival array,
From their dark deserts, gaunt and wasting now
Stalked like fell shades among their perished prey;
In their green eyes a strange disease did glow —
They sank in hideous spasm, or pains severe and slow.

XV

The fish were poisoned in the streams; the birds
In the green woods perished; the insect race
Was withered up; the scattered flocks and herds
Who had survived the wild beasts' hungry chase
Died moaning, each upon the other's face
In helpless agony gazing; round the City
All night, the lean hyenas their sad case
Like starving infants wailed — a woful ditty;
And many a mother wept, pierced with unnatural pity.

XVI

Amid the aërial minarets on high
The Æthiopian vultures fluttering fell
From their long line of brethren in the sky,
Startling the concourse of mankind. Too well
These signs the coming mischief did foretell.
Strange panic first, a deep and sickening dread,

Within each heart, like ice, did sink and dwell,
A voiceless thought of evil, which did spread
With the quick glance of eyes, like withering lightnings shed.

XVII

Day after day, when the year wanes, the frosts
Strip its green crown of leaves till all is bare;
So on those strange and congregated hosts
Came Famine, a swift shadow, and the air
Groaned with the burden of a new despair;
Famine, than whom Misrule no deadlier daughter
Feeds from her thousand breasts, though sleeping there
With lidless eyes lie Faith and Plague and Slaughter —
A ghastly brood conceived of Lethe's sullen water.

XVIII

There was no food; the corn was trampled down,
The flocks and herds had perished; on the shore
The dead and putrid fish were ever thrown;
The deeps were foodless, and the winds no more
Creaked with the weight of birds, but as before
Those wingèd things sprang forth, were void of shade;
The vines and orchards, autumn's golden store,
Were burned; so that the meanest food was weighed
With gold, and avarice died before the god it made.

XIX

There was no corn — in the wide marketplace
All loathliest things, even human flesh, was sold;
They weighed it in small scales — and many a face
Was fixed in eager horror then. His gold
The miser brought; the tender maid, grown bold
Through hunger, bared her scornèd charms in vain;
The mother brought her eldest born, controlled

By instinct blind as love, but turned again
And bade her infant suck, and died in silent pain.

XX

Then fell blue Plague upon the race of man.
'Oh, for the sheathèd steel, so late which gave
Oblivion to the dead when the streets ran
With brothers' blood! Oh, that the earthquake's grave
Would gape, or Ocean lift its stifling wave!'
Vain cries — throughout the streets thousands pursued
Each by his fiery torture howl and rave
Or sit in frenzy's unimagined mood
Upon fresh heaps of dead — a ghastly multitude.

XXI

It was not hunger now, but thirst. Each well
Was choked with rotting corpses, and became
A caldron of green mist made visible
At sunrise. Thither still the myriads came,
Seeking to quench the agony of the flame
Which raged like poison through their bursting veins;
Naked they were from torture, without shame,
Spotted with nameless scars and lurid blains —
Childhood, and youth, and age, writhing in savage pains.

XXII

It was not thirst, but madness! Many saw
Their own lean image everywhere — it went
A ghastlier self beside them, till the awe
Of that dread sight to self-destruction sent
Those shrieking victims; some, ere life was spent,
Sought, with a horrid sympathy, to shed
Contagion on the sound; and others rent
Their matted hair, and cried aloud, 'We tread
On fire! the avenging Power his hell on earth has spread.'

XXIII

Sometimes the living by the dead were hid.
Near the great fountain in the public square,
Where corpses made a crumbling pyramid
Under the sun, was heard one stifled prayer
For life, in the hot silence of the air;
And strange ‘t was ‘mid that hideous heap to see
Some shrouded in their long and golden hair,
As if not dead, but slumbering quietly,
Like forms which sculptors carve, then love to agony.

XXIV

Famine had spared the palace of the King;
He rioted in festival the while,
He and his guards and Priests; but Plague did fling
One shadow upon all. Famine can smile
On him who brings it food, and pass, with guile
Of thankful falsehood, like a courtier gray,
The house-dog of the throne; but many a mile
Comes Plague, a wingèd wolf, who loathes alway
The garbage and the scum that strangers make her prey.

XXV

So, near the throne, amid the gorgeous feast,
Sheathed in resplendent arms, or loosely dight
To luxury, ere the mockery yet had ceased
That lingered on his lips, the warrior’s might
Was loosened, and a new and ghastlier night
In dreams of frenzy lapped his eyes; he fell
Headlong, or with stiff eyeballs sate upright
Among the guests, or raving mad did tell
Strange truths — a dying seer of dark oppression’s hell.

XXVI

The Princes and the Priests were pale with terror;
That monstrous faith wherewith they ruled mankind
Fell, like a shaft loosed by the bowman's error,
On their own hearts; they sought and they could find
No refuge—'t was the blind who led the blind!
So, through the desolate streets to the high fane,
The many-tongued and endless armies wind
In sad procession; each among the train
To his own idol lifts his supplications vain.

XXVII

'O God!' they cried, 'we know our secret pride
Has scorned thee, and thy worship, and thy name;
Secure in human power, we have defied
Thy fearful might; we bend in fear and shame
Before thy presence; with the dust we claim
Kindred; be merciful, O King of Heaven!
Most justly have we suffered for thy fame
Made dim, but be at length our sins forgiven,
Ere to despair and death thy worshippers be driven!

XXVIII

'O King of Glory! Thou alone hast power!
Who can resist thy will? who can restrain
Thy wrath when on the guilty thou dost shower
The shafts of thy revenge, a blistering rain?
Greatest and best, be merciful again!
Have we not stabbed thine enemies, and made
The Earth an altar, and the Heavens a fane,
Where thou wert worshipped with their blood, and laid
Those hearts in dust which would thy searchless works have weighed?

XXIX

'Well didst thou loosen on this impious City
Thine angels of revenge! recall them now;

Thy worshippers abased here kneel for pity,
And bind their souls by an immortal vow.
We swear by thee — and to our oath do thou
Give sanction from thine hell of fiends and flame —
That we will kill with fire and torments slow
The last of those who mocked thy holy name
And scorned the sacred laws thy prophets did proclaim.'

XXX

Thus they with trembling limbs and pallid lips
Worshipped their own hearts' image, dim and vast,
Scared by the shade wherewith they would eclipse
The light of other minds; troubled they passed
From the great Temple; fiercely still and fast
The arrows of the plague among them fell,
And they on one another gazed aghast,
And through the hosts contention wild befell,
As each of his own god the wondrous works did tell.

XXXI

And Oromaze, Joshua, and Mahomet,
Moses, and Buddh, Zerdusht, and Brahm, and Foh,
A tumult of strange names, which never met
Before, as watchwords of a single woe,
Arose; each raging votary 'gan to throw
Aloft his armèd hands, and each did howl
'Our God alone is God!' and slaughter now
Would have gone forth, when from beneath a cowl
A voice came forth which pierced like ice through every soul.

XXXII

'T was an Iberian Priest from whom it came,
A zealous man, who led the legioned West,
With words which faith and pride had steeped in flame,
To quell the unbelievers; a dire guest

Even to his friends was he, for in his breast
Did hate and guile lie watchful, intertwined,
Twin serpents in one deep and winding nest;
He loathed all faith beside his own, and pined
To wreak his fear of Heaven in vengeance on mankind.

XXXIII

But more he loathed and hated the clear light
Of wisdom and free thought, and more did fear,
Lest, kindled once, its beams might pierce the night,
Even where his Idol stood; for far and near
Did many a heart in Europe leap to hear
That faith and tyranny were trampled down, —
Many a pale victim, doomed for truth to share
The murderer's cell, or see with helpless groan
The Priests his children drag for slaves to serve their own.

XXXIV

He dared not kill the infidels with fire
Or steel, in Europe; the slow agonies
Of legal torture mocked his keen desire;
So he made truce with those who did despise
The expiation and the sacrifice,
That, though detested, Islam's kindred creed
Might crush for him those deadlier enemies;
For fear of God did in his bosom breed
A jealous hate of man, an unreposing need.

XXXV

'Peace! Peace!' he cried, 'when we are dead, the Day
Of Judgment comes, and all shall surely know
Whose God is God; each fearfully shall pay
The errors of his faith in endless woe!
But there is sent a mortal vengeance now
On earth, because an impious race had spurned

Him whom we all adore, — a subtle foe,
By whom for ye this dread reward was earned,
And kingly thrones, which rest on faith, nigh overturned.

XXXVI

‘Think ye, because ye weep and kneel and pray,
That God will lull the pestilence? It rose
Even from beneath his throne, where, many a day,
His mercy soothed it to a dark repose;
It walks upon the earth to judge his foes,
And what art thou and I, that he should deign
To curb his ghastly minister, or close
The gates of death, ere they receive the twain
Who shook with mortal spells his undefended reign?

XXXVII

‘Ay, there is famine in the gulf of hell,
Its giant worms of fire forever yawn, —
Their lurid eyes are on us! those who fell
By the swift shafts of pestilence ere dawn
Are in their jaws! they hunger for the spawn
Of Satan, their own brethren, who were sent
To make our souls their spoil. See, see! they fawn
Like dogs, and they will sleep, with luxury spent,
When those detested hearts their iron fangs have rent!

XXXVIII

‘Our God may then lull Pestilence to sleep.
Pile high the pyre of expiation now!
A forest’s spoil of boughs; and on the heap
Pour venomous gums, which sullenly and slow,
When touched by flame, shall burn, and melt, and flow,
A stream of clinging fire — and fix on high
A net of iron, and spread forth below

A couch of snakes, and scorpions, and the fry
Of centipedes and worms, earth's hellish progeny!

XXXIX

'Let Laon and Laone on that pyre,
Linked tight with burning brass, perish! — then pray
That with this sacrifice the withering ire
Of Heaven may be appeased.' He ceased, and they
A space stood silent, as far, far away
The echoes of his voice among them died;
And he knelt down upon the dust, alway
Muttering the curses of his speechless pride,
Whilst shame, and fear, and awe, the armies did divide.

XL

His voice was like a blast that burst the portal
Of fabled hell; and as he spake, each one
Saw gape beneath the chasms of fire immortal,
And Heaven above seemed cloven, where, on a throne
Girt round with storms and shadows, sate alone
Their King and Judge. Fear killed in every breast
All natural pity then, a fear unknown
Before, and with an inward fire possessed
They raged like homeless beasts whom burning woods invest.

XLI

'T was morn. — At noon the public crier went forth,
Proclaiming through the living and the dead, —
'The Monarch saith that his great empire's worth
Is set on Laon and Laone's head;
He who but one yet living here can lead,
Or who the life from both their hearts can wring,
Shall be the kingdom's heir — a glorious meed!
But he who both alive can hither bring
The Princess shall espouse, and reign an equal King.'

XLII

Ere night the pyre was piled, the net of iron
Was spread above, the fearful couch below;
It overtopped the towers that did environ
That spacious square; for Fear is never slow
To build the thrones of Hate, her mate and foe;
So she scourged forth the maniac multitude
To rear this pyramid — tottering and slow,
Plague-stricken, foodless, like lean herds pursued
By gadflies, they have piled the heath and gums and wood.

XLIII

Night came, a starless and a moonless gloom.
Until the dawn, those hosts of many a nation
Stood round that pile, as near one lover's tomb
Two gentle sisters mourn their desolation;
And in the silence of that expectation
Was heard on high the reptiles' hiss and crawl —
It was so deep, save when the devastation
Of the swift pest with fearful interval,
Marking its path with shrieks, among the crowd would fall.

XLIV

Morn came. — Among those sleepless multitudes,
Madness, and Fear, and Plague, and Famine, still
Heaped corpse on corpse, as in autumnal woods
The frosts of many a wind with dead leaves fill
Earth's cold and sullen brooks; in silence still,
The pale survivors stood; ere noon the fear
Of Hell became a panic, which did kill
Like hunger or disease, with whispers drear,
As 'Hush! hark! come they yet? — Just Heaven, thine hour is near!'

XLV

And Priests rushed through their ranks, some counterfeiting
The rage they did inspire, some mad indeed
With their own lies. They said their god was waiting

To see his enemies writhe, and burn, and bleed, —
And that, till then, the snakes of Hell had need
Of human souls; three hundred furnaces
Soon blazed through the wide City, where, with speed,
Men brought their infidel kindred to appease
God's wrath, and, while they burned, knelt round on quivering knees.

XLVI

The noontide sun was darkened with that smoke;
The winds of eve dispersed those ashes gray.
The madness, which these rites had lulled, awoke
Again at sunset. Who shall dare to say
The deeds which night and fear brought forth, or weigh
In balance just the good and evil there?
He might man's deep and searchless heart display,
And cast a light on those dim labyrinths where
Hope near imagined chasm is struggling with despair.

XLVII

'T is said a mother dragged three children then
To those fierce flames which roast the eyes in the head,
And laughed, and died; and that unholy men,
Feasting like fiends upon the infidel dead,
Looked from their meal, and saw an angel tread
The visible floor of Heaven, and it was she!
And, on that night, one without doubt or dread
Came to the fire, and said, 'Stop, I am he!
Kill me!' — They burned them both with hellish mockery.

XLVIII

And, one by one, that night, young maidens came,
Beauteous and calm, like shapes of living stone
Clothed in the light of dreams, and by the flame,
Which shrank as overgorged, they laid them down,
And sung a low sweet song, of which alone
One word was heard, and that was Liberty;
And that some kissed their marble feet, with moan

Like love, and died, and then that they did die
With happy smiles, which sunk in white tranquillity.

REVOLT OF ISLAM: Canto Eleventh

I

SHE saw me not — she heard me not — alone
Upon the mountain's dizzy brink she stood;
She spake not, breathed not, moved not — there was thrown
Over her look the shadow of a mood
Which only clothes the heart in solitude,
A thought of voiceless depth; — she stood alone —
Above, the Heavens were spread — below, the flood
Was murmuring in its caves — the wind had blown
Her hair apart, through which her eyes and forehead shone.

II

A cloud was hanging o'er the western mountains;
Before its blue and moveless depth were flying
Gray mists poured forth from the unresting fountains
Of darkness in the North; the day was dying;
Sudden, the sun shone forth — its beams were lying
Like boiling gold on Ocean, strange to see,
And on the shattered vapors which, defying
The power of light in vain, tossed restlessly
In the red Heaven, like wrecks in a tempestuous sea.

III

It was a stream of living beams, whose bank
On either side by the cloud's cleft was made;
And where its chasms that flood of glory drank,
Its waves gushed forth like fire, and as if swayed
By some mute tempest, rolled on *her;* the shade
Of her bright image floated on the river
Of liquid light, which then did end and fade —
Her radiant shape upon its verge did shiver;
Aloft, her flowing hair like strings of flame did quiver.

IV

I stood beside her, but she saw me not —
She looked upon the sea, and skies, and earth.
Rapture and love and admiration wrought
A passion deeper far than tears, or mirth,
Or speech, or gesture, or whate'er has birth
From common joy; which with the speechless feeling
That led her there united, and shot forth
From her far eyes a light of deep revealing,
All but her dearest self from my regard concealing.

V

Her lips were parted, and the measured breath
Was now heard there; her dark and intricate eyes,
Orb within orb, deeper than sleep or death,
Absorbed the glories of the burning skies,
Which, mingling with her heart's deep ecstasies,
Burst from her looks and gestures; and a light
Of liquid tenderness, like love, did rise
From her whole frame — an atmosphere which quite
Arrayed her in its beams, tremulous and soft and bright.

VI

She would have clasped me to her glowing frame;
Those warm and odorous lips might soon have shed
On mine the fragrance and the invisible flame
Which now the cold winds stole; she would have laid
Upon my languid heart her dearest head;
I might have heard her voice, tender and sweet;
Her eyes, mingling with mine, might soon have fed
My soul with their own joy. — One moment yet
I gazed — we parted then, never again to meet!

VII

Never but once to meet on earth again!
She heard me as I fled — her eager tone
Sunk on my heart, and almost wove a chain
Around my will to link it with her own,
So that my stern resolve was almost gone.
'I cannot reach thee! whither dost thou fly?
My steps are faint. — Come back, thou dearest one —
Return, ah me! return!' — the wind passed by
On which those accents died, faint, far, and lingeringly.

VIII

Woe! woe! that moonless midnight! Want and Pest
Were horrible, but one more fell doth rear,
As in a hydra's swarming lair, its crest
Eminent among those victims — even the Fear
Of Hell; each girt by the hot atmosphere
Of his blind agony, like a scorpion stung
By his own rage upon his burning bier
Of circling coals of fire. But still there clung
One hope, like a keen sword on starting threads uphung: —

IX

Not death — death was no more refuge or rest;
Not life — it was despair to be! — not sleep,
For fiends and chasms of fire had dispossessed
All natural dreams; to wake was not to weep,
But to gaze, mad and pallid, at the leap
To which the Future, like a snaky scourge,
Or like some tyrant's eye which aye doth keep
Its withering beam upon his slaves, did urge
Their steps; they heard the roar of Hell's sulphureous surge.

X

Each of that multitude, alone and lost
To sense of outward things, one hope yet knew;

As on a foam-girt crag some seaman tossed
Stares at the rising tide, or like the crew
Whilst now the ship is splitting through and through;
Each, if the tramp of a far steed was heard,
Started from sick despair, or if there flew
One murmur on the wind, or if some word
Which none can gather yet the distant crowd has stirred.

XI

Why became cheeks, wan with the kiss of death,
Paler from hope? they had sustained despair.
Why watched those myriads with suspended breath
Sleepless a second night? the are not here,
The victims — and hour by hour, a vision drear,
Warm corpses fall upon the clay-cold dead;
And even in death their lips are wreathed with fear.
The crowd is mute and moveless — overhead
Silent Arcturus shines — ha! hear'st thou not the tread

XII

Of rushing feet? laughter? the shout, the scream
Of triumph not to be contained? See! hark!
They come, they come! give way! Alas, ye deem
Falsely—'t is but a crowd of maniacs stark
Driven, like a troop of spectres, through the dark
From the choked well, whence a bright death-fire sprung,
A lurid earth-star, which dropped many a spark
From its blue train, and, spreading widely, clung
To their wild hair, like mist the topmost pines among.

XIII

And many, from the crowd collected there,
Joined that strange dance in fearful sympathies;
There was the silence of a long despair,
When the last echo of those terrible cries

Came from a distant street, like agonies
Stifled afar. — Before the Tyrant's throne
All night his agèd Senate sate, their eyes
In stony expectation fixed; when one
Sudden before them stood, a Stranger and alone.

XIV

Dark Priests and haughty Warriors gazed on him
With baffled wonder, for a hermit's vest
Concealed his face; but when he spake, his tone
Ere yet the matter did their thoughts arrest —
Earnest, benignant, calm, as from a breast
Void of all hate or terror — made them start;
For as with gentle accents he addressed
His speech to them, on each unwilling heart
Unusual awe did fall — a spirit-quelling dart.

XV

'Ye Princes of the Earth, ye sit aghast
Amid the ruin which yourselves have made;
Yes, Desolation heard your trumpet's blast,
And sprang from sleep! — dark Terror has obeyed
Your bidding. Oh, that I, whom ye have made
Your foe, could set my dearest enemy free
From pain and fear! but evil casts a shade
Which cannot pass so soon, and Hate must be
The nurse and parent still of an ill progeny.

XVI

'Ye turn to Heaven for aid in your distress;
Alas, that ye, the mighty and the wise,
Who, if ye dared, might not aspire to less
Than ye conceive of power, should fear the lies
Which thou, and thou, didst frame for mysteries
To blind your slaves! consider your own thought —

An empty and a cruel sacrifice
Ye now prepare for a vain idol wrought
Out of the fears and hate which vain desires have brought.

XVII

‘Ye seek for happiness — alas the day!
Ye find it not in luxury nor in gold,
Nor in the fame, nor in the envied sway
For which, O willing slaves to Custom old,
Severe task-mistress, ye your hearts have sold.
Ye seek for peace, and, when ye die, to dream
No evil dreams; — all mortal things are cold
And senseless then; if aught survive, I deem
It must be love and joy, for they immortal seem.

XVIII

‘Fear not the future, weep not for the past.
Oh, could I win your ears to dare be now
Glorious, and great, and calm! that ye would cast
Into the dust those symbols of your woe,
Purple, and gold, and steel! that ye would go
Proclaiming to the nations whence ye came
That Want and Plague and Fear from slavery flow;
And that mankind is free, and that the shame
Of royalty and faith is lost in freedom’s fame!

XIX

‘If thus ‘t is well — if not, I come to say
That Laon—’ While the Stranger spoke, among
The Council sudden tumult and affray
Arose, for many of those warriors young
Had on his eloquent accents fed and hung
Like bees on mountain-flowers; they knew the truth,
And from their thrones in vindication sprung;

The men of faith and law then without ruth
Drew forth their secret steel, and stabbed each ardent youth.

XX

They stabbed them in the back and sneered — a slave,
Who stood behind the throne, those corpses drew
Each to its bloody, dark and secret grave;
And one more daring raised his steel anew
To pierce the Stranger: ‘What hast thou to do
With me, poor wretch?’ — Calm, solemn and severe,
That voice unstrung his sinews, and he threw
His dagger on the ground, and, pale with fear,
Sate silently — his voice then did the Stranger rear.

XXI

‘It doth avail not that I weep for ye —
Ye cannot change, since ye are old and gray,
And ye have chosen your lot — your fame must be
A book of blood, whence in a milder day
Men shall learn truth, when ye are wrapped in clay;
Now ye shall triumph. I am Laon’s friend,
And him to your revenge will I betray,
So ye concede one easy boon. Attend!
For now I speak of things which ye can apprehend.

XXII

‘There is a People mighty in its youth,
A land beyond the Oceans of the West,
Where, though with rudest rites, Freedom and Truth
Are worshipped; from a glorious Mother’s breast,
Who, since high Athens fell, among the rest
Sate like the Queen of Nations, but in woe,
By inbred monsters outraged and oppressed,
Turns to her chainless child for succor now,
It draws the milk of Power in Wisdom’s fullest flow.

XXIII

‘That land is like an Eagle, whose young gaze
Feeds on the noontide beam, whose golden plume
Floats moveless on the storm, and in the blaze
Of sunrise gleams when earth is wrapped in gloom;
An epitaph of glory for the tomb
Of murdered Europe may thy fame be made,
Great People! as the sands shalt thou become;
Thy growth is swift as morn when night must fade;
The multitudinous Earth shall sleep beneath thy shade.

XXIV

‘Yes, in the desert there is built a home
For Freedom. Genius is made strong to rear
The monuments of man beneath the dome
Of a new Heaven; myriads assemble there,
Whom the proud lords of man, in rage or fear,
Drive from their wasted homes. The boon I pray
Is this — that Cythna shall be convoyed there, —
Nay, start not at the name — America!
And then to you this night Laon will I betray.

XXV

‘With me do what ye will. I am your foe!’
The light of such a joy as makes the stare
Of hungry snakes like living emeralds glow
Shone in a hundred human eyes.—’Where, where
Is Laon? haste! fly! drag him swiftly here!
We grant thy boon.’—’I put no trust in ye,
Swear by the Power ye dread.’—’We swear, we swear!’
The Stranger threw his vest back suddenly,
And smiled in gentle pride, and said, ‘Lo! I am he!’

REVOLT OF ISLAM: Canto Twelfth

I

THE transport of a fierce and monstrous gladness
Spread through the multitudinous streets, fast flying
Upon the winds of fear; from his dull madness
The starveling waked, and died in joy; the dying,
Among the corpses in stark agony lying,
Just heard the happy tidings, and in hope
Closed their faint eyes; from house to house replying
With loud acclaim, the living shook Heaven's cope,
And filled the startled Earth with echoes. Morn did ope

II

Its pale eyes then; and lo! the long array
Of guards in golden arms, and Priests beside,
Singing their bloody hymns, whose garbs betray
The blackness of the faith it seems to hide;
And see the Tyrant's gem-wrought chariot glide
Among the gloomy cowls and glittering spears —
A Shape of light is sitting by his side,
A child most beautiful. I' the midst appears
Laon — exempt alone from mortal hopes and fears.

III

His head and feet are bare, his hands are bound
Behind with heavy chains, yet none do wreak
Their scoffs on him, though myriads throng around;
There are no sneers upon his lip which speak
That scorn or hate has made him bold; his cheek
Resolve has not turned pale; his eyes are mild
And calm, and, like the morn about to break,
Smile on mankind; his heart seems reconciled
To all things and itself, like a reposing child.

IV

Tumult was in the soul of all beside,
Ill joy, or doubt, or fear; but those who saw
Their tranquil victim pass felt wonder glide
Into their brain, and became calm with awe. —
See, the slow pageant near the pile doth draw.
A thousand torches in the spacious square,
Borne by the ready slaves of ruthless law,
Await the signal round; the morning fair
Is changed to a dim night by that unnatural glare.

V

And see! beneath a sun-bright canopy,
Upon a platform level with the pile,
The anxious Tyrant sit, enthroned on high,
Girt by the chieftains of the host; all smile
In expectation but one child: the while
I, Laon, led by mutes, ascend my bier
Of fire, and look around; — each distant isle
Is dark in the bright dawn; towers far and near
Pierce like reposing flames the tremulous atmosphere.

VI

There was such silence through the host as when
An earthquake, trampling on some populous town,
Has crushed ten thousand with one tread, and men
Expect the second; all were mute but one,
That fairest child, who, bold with love, alone
Stood up before the king, without avail,
Pleading for Laon's life — her stifled groan
Was heard — she trembled like one aspen pale
Among the gloomy pines of a Norwegian vale.

VII

What were his thoughts linked in the morning sun,
Among those reptiles, stingless with delay,
Even like a tyrant's wrath? — the signal-gun
Roared — hark, again! in that dread pause he lay
As in a quiet dream — the slaves obey —
A thousand torches drop, — and hark, the last
Bursts on that awful silence; far away
Millions, with hearts that beat both loud and fast,
Watch for the springing flame expectant and aghast.

VIII

They fly — the torches fall — a cry of fear
Has startled the triumphant! — they recede!
For, ere the cannon's roar has died, they hear
The tramp of hoofs like earthquake, and a steed
Dark and gigantic, with the tempest's speed,
Bursts through their ranks; a woman sits thereon,
Fairer it seems than aught that earth can breed,
Calm, radiant, like the phantom of the dawn,
A spirit from the caves of daylight wandering gone.

IX

All thought it was God's Angel come to sweep
The lingering guilty to their fiery grave;
The Tyrant from his throne in dread did leap, —
Her innocence his child from fear did save;
Scared by the faith they feigned, each priestly slave
Knelt for His mercy whom they served with blood,
And, like the refluence of a mighty wave
Sucked into the loud sea, the multitude
With crushing panic fled in terror's altered mood.

X

They pause, they blush, they gaze; a gathering shout
Bursts like one sound from the ten thousand streams

Of a tempestuous sea; that sudden rout
One checked who never in his mildest dreams
Felt awe from grace or loveliness, the seams
Of his rent heart so hard and cold a creed
Had seared with blistering ice; but he misdeems
That he is wise whose wounds do only bleed
Inly for self, — thus thought the Iberian Priest indeed,

XI

And others, too, thought he was wise to see
In pain, and fear, and hate, something divine —
In love and beauty, no divinity.
Now with a bitter smile, whose light did shine
Like a fiend's hope upon his lips and eyne,
He said, and the persuasion of that sneer
Rallied his trembling comrades—'Is it mine
To stand alone, when kings and soldiers fear
A woman? Heaven has sent its other victim here.'

XII

'Were it not impious,' said the King, 'to break
Our holy oath?'—'Impious to keep it, say!'
Shrieked the exulting Priest:—'Slaves, to the stake
Bind her, and on my head the burden lay
Of her just torments; at the Judgment Day
Will I stand up before the golden throne
Of Heaven, and cry,—"To Thee did I betray
An infidel! but for me she would have known
Another moment's joy!" the glory be thine own.'

XIII

They trembled, but replied not, nor obeyed,
Pausing in breathless silence. Cythna sprung
From her gigantic steed, who, like a shade
Chased by the winds, those vacant streets among

Fled tameless, as the brazen rein she flung
Upon his neck, and kissed his moonèd brow.
A piteous sight, that one so fair and young
The clasp of such a fearful death should woo
With smiles of tender joy as beamed from Cythna now.

XIV

The warm tears burst in spite of faith and fear
From many a tremulous eye, but, like soft dews
Which feed spring's earliest buds, hung gathered there,
Frozen by doubt, — alas! they could not choose
But weep; for, when her faint limbs did refuse
To climb the pyre, upon the mutes she smiled;
And with her eloquent gestures, and the hues
Of her quick lips, even as a weary child
Wins sleep from some fond nurse with its caresses mild,

XV

She won them, though unwilling, her to bind
Near me, among the snakes. When then had fled
One soft reproach that was most thrilling kind,
She smiled on me, and nothing then we said,
But each upon the other's countenance fed
Looks of insatiate love; the mighty veil
Which doth divide the living and the dead
Was almost rent, the world grew dim and pale —
All light in Heaven or Earth beside our love did fail.

XVI

Yet — yet — one brief relapse, like the last beam
Of dying flames, the stainless air around
Hung silent and serene — a blood-red gleam
Burst upwards, hurling fiercely from the ground
The globèd smoke; I heard the mighty sound
Of its uprise, like a tempestuous ocean;

And, through its chasms I saw, as in a swound,
The Tyrant's child fall without life or motion
Before his throne, subdued by some unseen emotion. —

XVII

And is this death? — The pyre has disappeared,
The Pestilence, the Tyrant, and the throng;
The flames grow silent — slowly there is heard
The music of a breath-suspending song,
Which, like the kiss of love when life is young,
Steeps the faint eyes in darkness sweet and deep;
With ever-changing notes it floats along,
Till on my passive soul there seemed to creep
A melody, like waves on wrinkled sands that leap.

XVIII

The warm touch of a soft and tremulous hand
Wakened me then; lo, Cythna sate reclined
Beside me, on the waved and golden sand
Of a clear pool, upon a bank o'ertwined
With strange and star-bright flowers which to the wind
Breathed divine odor; high above was spread
The emerald heaven of trees of unknown kind,
Whose moonlike blooms and bright fruit overhead
A shadow, which was light, upon the waters shed.

XIX

And round about sloped many a lawny mountain
With incense-bearing forests and vast caves
Of marble radiance, to that mighty fountain;
And, where the flood its own bright margin laves,
Their echoes talk with its eternal waves,
Which from the depths whose jagged caverns breed
Their unreposing strife it lifts and heaves,

Till through a chasm of hills they roll, and feed
A river deep, which flies with smooth but arrowy speed.

XX

As we sate gazing in a trance of wonder,
A boat approached, borne by the musical air
Along the waves which sung and sparkled under
Its rapid keel. A wingèd Shape sate there,
A child with silver-shining wings, so fair
That, as her bark did through the waters glide,
The shadow of the lingering waves did wear
Light, as from starry beams; from side to side
While veering to the wind her plumes the bark did guide.

XXI

The boat was one curved shell of hollow pearl,
Almost translucent with the light divine
Of her within; the prow and stern did curl,
Hornèd on high, like the young moon supine,
When o'er dim twilight mountains dark with pine
It floats upon the sunset's sea of beams,
Whose golden waves in many a purple line
Fade fast, till, borne on sunlight's ebbing streams,
Dilating, on earth's verge the sunken meteor gleams.

XXII

Its keel has struck the sands beside our feet.
Then Cythna turned to me, and from her eyes,
Which swam with unshed tears, a look more sweet
Than happy love, a wild and glad surprise,
Glanced as she spake: 'Ay, this is Paradise
And not a dream, and we are all united!
Lo, that is mine own child, who in the guise
Of madness came, like day to one benighted
In lonesome woods; my heart is now too well requited!'

XXIII

And then she wept aloud, and in her arms
Clasped that bright Shape, less marvellously fair
Than her own human hues and living charms,
Which, as she leaned in passion's silence there,
Breathed warmth on the cold bosom of the air,
Which seemed to blush and tremble with delight;
The glossy darkness of her streaming hair
Fell o'er that snowy child, and wrapped from sight
The fond and long embrace which did their hearts unite.

XXIV

Then the bright child, the plumèd Seraph, came,
And fixed its blue and beaming eyes on mine,
And said, 'I was disturbed by tremulous shame
When once we met, yet knew that I was thine
From the same hour in which thy lips divine
Kindled a clinging dream within my brain,
Which ever waked when I might sleep, to twine
Thine image with *her* memory dear; again
We meet, exempted now from mortal fear or pain.

XXV

'When the consuming flames had wrapped ye round,
The hope which I had cherished went away;
I fell in agony on the senseless ground,
And hid mine eyes in dust, and far astray
My mind was gone, when bright, like dawning day,
The Spectre of the Plague before me flew,
And breathed upon my lips, and seemed to say,
"They wait for thee, belovèd!" — then I knew
The death-mark on my breast, and became calm anew.

XXVI

‘It was the calm of love — for I was dying.
I saw the black and half-extinguished pyre
In its own gray and shrunken ashes lying;
The pitchy smoke of the departed fire
Still hung in many a hollow dome and spire
Above the towers, like night, — beneath whose shade,
Awed by the ending of their own desire,
The armies stood; a vacancy was made
In expectation’s depth, and so they stood dismayed.

XXVII

‘The frightful silence of that altered mood
The tortures of the dying clove alone,
Till one uprose among the multitude,
And said—”The flood of time is rolling on;
We stand upon its brink, whilst *they* are gone
To glide in peace down death’s mysterious stream.
Have ye done well? they moulder, flesh and bone,
Who might have made this life’s envenomed dream
A sweeter draught than ye will ever taste, I deem.

XXVIII

‘“These perish as the good and great of yore
Have perished, and their murderers will repent;
Yes, vain and barren tears shall flow before
Yon smoke has faded from the firmament,
Even for this cause, that ye, who must lament
The death of those that made this world so fair,
Cannot recall them now; but then is lent
To man the wisdom of a high despair,
When such can die, and he live on and linger here.

XXIX

‘“Ay, ye may fear not now the Pestilence,
From fabled hell as by a charm withdrawn;

All power and faith must pass, since calmly hence
In pain and fire have unbelievers gone;
And ye must sadly turn away, and moan
In secret, to his home each one returning;
And to long ages shall this hour be known,
And slowly shall its memory, ever burning,
Fill this dark night of things with an eternal morning.

XXX

‘“For me that world is grown too void and cold,
Since hope pursues immortal destiny
With steps thus slow — therefore shall ye behold
How those who love, yet fear not, dare to die;
Tell to your children this!” then suddenly
He sheathed a dagger in his heart, and fell;
My brain grew dark in death, and yet to me
There came a murmur from the crowd to tell
Of deep and mighty change which suddenly befell.

XXXI

‘Then suddenly I stood, a wingèd Thought,
Before the immortal Senate, and the seat
Of that star-shining Spirit, whence is wrought
The strength of its dominion, good and great,
The Better Genius of this world’s estate.
His realm around one mighty Fane is spread,
Elysian islands bright and fortunate,
Calm dwellings of the free and happy dead,
Where I am sent to lead!’ These wingèd words she said,

XXXII

And with the silence of her eloquent smile,
Bade us embark in her divine canoe;
Then at the helm we took our seat, the while
Above her head those plumes of dazzling hue

Into the winds' invisible stream she threw,
Sitting beside the prow; like gossamer
On the swift breath of morn the vessel flew
O'er the bright whirlpools of that fountain fair,
Whose shores receded fast while we seemed lingering there;

XXXIII

Till down that mighty stream dark, calm and fleet,
Between a chasm of cedarn mountains riven,
Chased by the thronging winds whose viewless feet,
As swift as twinkling beams, had under Heaven
From woods and waves wild sounds and odors driven,
The boat fled visibly; three nights and days,
Borne like a cloud through morn, and noon, and even,
We sailed along the winding watery ways
Of the vast stream, a long and labyrinthine maze.

XXXIV

A scene of joy and wonder to behold, —
That river's shapes and shadows changing ever,
Where the broad sunrise filled with deepening gold
Its whirlpools where all hues did spread and quiver;
And where melodious falls did burst and shiver
Among rocks clad with flowers, the foam and spray
Sparkled like stars upon the sunny river;
Or, when the moonlight poured a holier day,
One vast and glittering lake around green islands lay.

XXXV

Morn, noon and even, that boat of pearl outran
The streams which bore it, like the arrowy cloud
Of tempest, or the speedier thought of man,
Which flieth forth and cannot make abode;
Sometimes through forests, deep like night, we glode,
Between the walls of mighty mountains crowned

With Cyclopean piles, whose turrets proud,
The homes of the departed, dimly frowned
O’er the bright waves which girt their dark foundations round.

XXXVI

Sometimes between the wide and flowering meadows
Mile after mile we sailed, and ‘t was delight
To see far off the sunbeams chase the shadows
Over the grass; sometimes beneath the night
Of wide and vaulted caves, whose roofs were bright
With starry gems, we fled, whilst from their deep
And dark green chasms shades beautiful and white,
Amid sweet sounds across our path would sweep,
Like swift and lovely dreams that walk the waves of sleep.

XXXVII

And ever as we sailed, our minds were full
Of love and wisdom, which would overflow
In converse wild, and sweet, and wonderful;
And in quick smiles whose light would come and go,
Like music o’er wide waves, and in the flow
Of sudden tears, and in the mute caress;
For a deep shade was cleft, and we did know,
That virtue, though obscured on Earth, not less
Survives all mortal change in lasting loveliness.

XXXVIII

Three days and nights we sailed, as thought and feeling
Number delightful hours — for through the sky
The spherèd lamps of day and night, revealing
New changes and new glories, rolled on high,
Sun, Moon and moonlike lamps, the progeny
Of a diviner Heaven, serene and fair;
On the fourth day, wild as a wind-wrought sea

The stream became, and fast and faster bare
The spirit-wingèd boat, steadily speeding there.

XXXIX

Steady and swift, where the waves rolled like mountains
Within the vast ravine, whose rifts did pour
Tumultuous floods from their ten thousand fountains,
The thunder of whose earth-uplifting roar
Made the air sweep in whirlwinds from the shore,
Calm as a shade, the boat of that fair child
Securely fled that rapid stress before,
Amid the topmost spray and sunbows wild
Wreathed in the silver mist; in joy and pride we smiled.

XL

The torrent of that wide and raging river
Is passed, and our aërial speed suspended.
We look behind; a golden mist did quiver
When its wild surges with the lake were blended;
Our bark hung there, as on a line suspended
Between two heavens, — that windless, waveless lake,
Which four great cataracts from four vales, attended
By mists, aye feed; from rocks and clouds they break,
And of that azure sea a silent refuge make.

XLI

Motionless resting on the lake awhile,
I saw its marge of snow-bright mountains rear
Their peaks aloft; I saw each radiant isle;
And in the midst, afar, even like a sphere
Hung in one hollow sky, did there appear
The Temple of the Spirit; on the sound
Which issued thence drawn nearer and more near
Like the swift moon this glorious earth around,
The charmèd boat approached

ROSALIND AND HELEN

Rosalind and Helen was begun at Marlow as early as the summer of 1817, and was sufficiently far advanced to encourage Shelley to send a copy to the publisher before leaving England in March, 1818. The work was finished in August, at the Baths of Lucca, and published in the spring of 1819. Shelley's original *Advertisement* to the volume, dated Naples, December 20, 1818, opens with the following:

'The story of *Rosalind and Helen* is, undoubtedly, not an attempt in the highest style of poetry. It is in no degree calculated to excite profound meditation; and if, by interesting the affections and amusing the imagination, it awaken a certain ideal melancholy favorable to the reception of more important impressions, it will produce in the reader all that the writer experienced in the composition. I resigned myself, as I wrote, to the impulses of the feelings which moulded the conception of the story; and this impulse determined the pauses of a measure, which only pretends to be regular inasmuch as it corresponds with, and expresses, the irregularity of the imaginations which inspired it.'

The feelings here spoken of 'which moulded the conception of the story' were suggested, in part, by the relation of Mrs. Shelley with a friend of her girlhood, Isabel Baxter, who fell away from her early attachment in consequence of Mrs. Shelley's flight with Shelley in July, 1814, and was afterward reconciled with her. (Dowden, *Life,* ii. 130, 131.) Forman (Type Facsimile of the original edition, Shelley Society's Publications, Second Series, No. 17, Introduction) discusses the matter at length, together with the reflection of political events in England possibly to be detected in the poem. Shelley wrote to Peacock, 'I lay no stress on it one way or the other.' Mrs. Shelley's note develops the reason for this indifference:

'*Rosalind and Helen* was begun at Marlow, and thrown aside, till I found it; and, at my request, it was completed. Shelley had no care for any of his poems that did not emanate from the depths of his mind, and develop some high or abstruse truth. When he does touch on human life and the human heart, no pictures can be more faithful, more delicate, more subtle, or more pathetic. He never mentioned Love, but he shed a grace, borrowed from his

own nature, that scarcely any other poet has bestowed on that passion. When he spoke of it as the law of life, which inasmuch as we rebel against, we err and injure ourselves and others, he promulgated that which he considered an irrefragable truth. In his eyes it was the essence of our being, and all woe and pain arose from the war made against it by selfishness, or insensibility, or mistake. By reverting in his mind to this first principle, he discovered the source of many emotions, and could disclose the secrets of all hearts, and his delineations of passion and emotion touch the finest chords in our nature. *Rosalind and Helen* was finished during the summer of 1818, while we were at the Baths of Lucca.'

ROSALIND AND HELEN

ROSALIND, HELEN, *and her Child.*

SCENE. *The Shore of the Lake of Como.*

HELEN

COME hither, my sweet Rosalind.
‘T is long since thou and I have met;
And yet methinks it were unkind
Those moments to forget.
Come, sit by me. I see thee stand
By this lone lake, in this far land,
Thy loose hair in the light wind flying,
Thy sweet voice to each tone of even
United, and thine eyes replying
To the hues of yon fair heaven.
Come, gentle friend! wilt sit by me?
And be as thou wert wont to be
Ere we were disunited?
None doth behold us now; the power
That led us forth at this lone hour
Will be but ill requited
If thou depart in scorn. Oh, come,
And talk of our abandoned home!
Remember, this is Italy,
And we are exiles. Talk with me
Of that our land, whose wilds and floods,
Barren and dark although they be,
Were dearer than these chestnut woods;
Those heathy paths, that inland stream,
And the blue mountains, shapes which seem
Like wrecks of childhood’s sunny dream;
Which that we have abandoned now,
Weighs on the heart like that remorse
Which altered friendship leaves. I seek

No more our youthful intercourse.
That cannot be! Rosalind, speak,
Speak to me! Leave me not! When morn did come,
When evening fell upon our common home,
When for one hour we parted, — do not frown;
I would not chide thee, though thy faith is broken;
But turn to me. Oh! by this cherished token
Of woven hair, which thou wilt not disown,
Turn, as ‘t were but the memory of me,
And not my scornèd self who prayed to thee!

ROSALIND

Is it a dream, or do I see
And hear frail Helen? I would flee
Thy tainting touch; but former years
Arise, and bring forbidden tears;
And my o’erburdened memory
Seeks yet its lost repose in thee.
I share thy crime. I cannot choose
But weep for thee; mine own strange grief
But seldom stoops to such relief;
Nor ever did I love thee less,
Though mourning o’er thy wickedness
Even with a sister’s woe. I knew
What to the evil world is due,
And therefore sternly did refuse
To link me with the infamy
Of one so lost as Helen. Now,
Bewildered by my dire despair,
Wondering I blush, and weep that thou
Shouldst love me still — thou only! — There,
Let us sit on that gray stone
Till our mournful talk be done.

HELEN

Alas! not there; I cannot bear
The murmur of this lake to hear.

A sound from there, Rosalind dear,
Which never yet I heard elsewhere
But in our native land, recurs,
Even here where now we meet. It stirs
Too much of suffocating sorrow!
In the dell of yon dark chestnut wood
Is a stone seat, a solitude
Less like our own. The ghost of peace
Will not desert this spot. To-morrow,
If thy kind feelings should not cease,
We may sit here.

ROSALIND
Thou lead, my sweet,
And I will follow.

HENRY
'T is Fenici's seat
Where you are going? This is not the way,
Mamma; it leads behind those trees that grow
Close to the little river.

HELEN
Yes, I know;
I was bewildered. Kiss me and be gay,
Dear boy; why do you sob?

HENRY
I do not know;
But it might break any one's heart to see
You and the lady cry so bitterly.

HELEN
It is a gentle child, my friend. Go home,
Henry, and play with Lilla till I come.
We only cried with joy to see each other;
We are quite merry now. Good night.

The boy
Lifted a sudden look upon his mother,
And, in the gleam of forced and hollow joy
Which lightened o'er her face, laughed with the glee
Of light and unsuspecting infancy,
And whispered in her ear, 'Bring home with you
That sweet strange lady-friend.' Then off he flew,
But stopped, and beckoned with a meaning smile,
Where the road turned. Pale Rosalind the while,
Hiding her face, stood weeping silently.

In silence then they took the way
Beneath the forest's solitude.
It was a vast and antique wood,
Through which they took their way;
And the gray shades of evening
O'er that green wilderness did fling
Still deeper solitude.
Pursuing still the path that wound
The vast and knotted trees around,
Through which slow shades were wandering,
To a deep lawny dell they came,
To a stone seat beside a spring,
O'er which the columned wood did frame
A roofless temple, like the fane
Where, ere new creeds could faith obtain,
Man's early race once knelt beneath
The overhanging deity.
O'er this fair fountain hung the sky,
Now spangled with rare stars. The snake,
The pale snake, that with eager breath
Creeps here his noontide thirst to slake,
Is beaming with many a mingled hue,
Shed from yon dome's eternal blue,
When he floats on that dark and lucid flood
In the light of his own loveliness;
And the birds, that in the fountain dip

Their plumes, with fearless fellowship
Above and round him wheel and hover.
The fitful wind is heard to stir
One solitary leaf on high;
The chirping of the grasshopper
Fills every pause. There is emotion
In all that dwells at noontide here;
Then through the intricate wild wood
A maze of life and light and motion
Is woven. But there is stillness now —
Gloom, and the trance of Nature now.
The snake is in his cave asleep;
The birds are on the branches dreaming;
Only the shadows creep;
Only the glow-worm is gleaming;
Only the owls and the nightingales
Wake in this dell when daylight fails,
And gray shades gather in the woods;
And the owls have all fled far away
In a merrier glen to hoot and play,
For the moon is veiled and sleeping now.
The accustomed nightingale still broods
On her accustomed bough,
But she is mute; for her false mate
Has fled and left her desolate.

This silent spot tradition old
Had peopled with the spectral dead.
For the roots of the speaker's hair felt cold
And stiff, as with tremulous lips he told
That a hellish shape at midnight led
The ghost of a youth with hoary hair,
And sate on the seat beside him there,
Till a naked child came wandering by,
When the fiend would change to a lady fair!
A fearful tale! the truth was worse;
For here a sister and a brother

Had solemnized a monstrous curse,
Meeting in this fair solitude;
For beneath yon very sky,
Had they resigned to one another
Body and soul. The multitude,
Tracking them to the secret wood,
Tore limb from limb their innocent child,
And stabbed and trampled on its mother;
But the youth, for God's most holy grace,
A priest saved to burn in the market-place.

Duly at evening Helen came
To this lone silent spot,
From the wrecks of a tale of wilder sorrow
So much of sympathy to borrow
As soothed her own dark lot.
Duly each evening from her home,
With her fair child would Helen come
To sit upon that antique seat,
While the hues of day were pale;
And the bright boy beside her feet
Now lay, lifting at intervals
His broad blue eyes on her;
Now, where some sudden impulse calls,
Following. He was a gentle boy
And in all gentle sorts took joy.
Oft in a dry leaf for a boat,
With a small feather for a sail,
His fancy on that spring would float,
If some invisible breeze might stir
Its marble calm; and Helen smiled
Through tears of awe on the gay child,
To think that a boy as fair as he,
In years which never more may be,
By that same fount, in that same wood,
The like sweet fancies had pursued;
And that a mother, lost like her,

Had mournfully sate watching him.
Then all the scene was wont to swim
Through the mist of a burning tear.
For many months had Helen known
This scene; and now she thither turned
Her footsteps, not alone.
The friend whose falsehood she had mourned
Sate with her on that seat of stone.
Silent they sate; for evening,
And the power its glimpses bring,
Had with one awful shadow quelled
The passion of their grief. They sate
With linkèd hands, for unrepelled
Had Helen taken Rosalind's.
Like the autumn wind, when it unbinds
The tangled locks of the nightshade's hair
Which is twined in the sultry summer air
Round the walls of an outworn sepulchre,
Did the voice of Helen, sad and sweet,
And the sound of her heart that ever beat
As with sighs and words she breathed on her,
Unbind the knots of her friend's despair,
Till her thoughts were free to float and flow;
And from her laboring bosom now,
Like the bursting of a prisoned flame,
The voice of a long-pent sorrow came.

ROSALIND

I saw the dark earth fall upon
The coffin; and I saw the stone
Laid over him whom this cold breast
Had pillowed to his nightly rest!
Thou knowest not, thou canst not know
My agony. Oh! I could not weep.
The sources whence such blessings flow
Were not to be approached by me!
But I could smile, and I could sleep,

Though with a self-accusing heart.
In morning's light, in evening's gloom,
I watched — and would not thence depart —
My husband's unlamented tomb.
My children knew their sire was gone;
But when I told them, 'He is dead,'
They laughed aloud in frantic glee,
They clapped their hands and leaped about,
Answering each other's ecstasy
With many a prank and merry shout.
But I sate silent and alone,
Wrapped in the mock of mourning weed.

They laughed, for he was dead; but I
Sate with a hard and tearless eye,
And with a heart which would deny
The secret joy it could not quell,
Low muttering o'er his loathèd name;
Till from that self-contention came
Remorse where sin was none; a hell
Which in pure spirits should not dwell.

I 'll tell thee truth. He was a man
Hard, selfish, loving only gold,
Yet full of guile; his pale eyes ran
With tears which each some falsehood told,
And oft his smooth and bridled tongue
Would give the lie to his flushing cheek;
He was a coward to the strong;
He was a tyrant to the weak,
On whom his vengeance he would wreak;
For scorn, whose arrows search the heart,
From many a stranger's eye would dart,
And on his memory cling, and follow
His soul to its home so cold and hollow.
He was a tyrant to the weak,
And we were such, alas the day!

Oft, when my little ones at play
Were in youth's natural lightness gay,
Or if they listened to some tale
Of travellers, or of fairyland,
When the light from the wood-fire's dying brand
Flashed on their faces, — if they heard
Or thought they heard upon the stair
His footstep, the suspended word
Died on my lips; we all grew pale;
The babe at my bosom was hushed with fear
If it thought it heard its father near;
And my two wild boys would near my knee
Cling, cowed and cowering fearfully.

I 'll tell thee truth: I loved another.
His name in my ear was ever ringing,
His form to my brain was ever clinging;
Yet, if some stranger breathed that name,
My lips turned white, and my heart beat fast.
My nights were once haunted by dreams of flame,
My days were dim in the shadow cast
By the memory of the same!
Day and night, day and night,
He was my breath and life and light,
For three short years, which soon were passed.
On the fourth, my gentle mother
Led me to the shrine, to be
His sworn bride eternally.
And now we stood on the altar stair,
When my father came from a distant land,
And with a loud and fearful cry
Rushed between us suddenly.
I saw the stream of his thin gray hair,
I saw his lean and lifted hand,
And heard his words — and live! O God!
Wherefore do I live?—'Hold, hold!'
He cried, 'I tell thee 't is her brother!

Thy mother, boy, beneath the sod
Of yon churchyard rests in her shroud so cold;
I am now weak, and pale, and old;
We were once dear to one another,
I and that corpse! Thou art our child!'
Then with a laugh both long and wild
The youth upon the pavement fell.
They found him dead! All looked on me,
The spasms of my despair to see;
But I was calm. I went away;
I was clammy-cold like clay.
I did not weep; I did not speak;
But day by day, week after week,
I walked about like a corpse alive.
Alas! sweet friend, you must believe
This heart is stone — it did not break.

My father lived a little while,
But all might see that he was dying,
He smiled with such a woful smile.
When he was in the churchyard lying
Among the worms, we grew quite poor,
So that no one would give us bread;
My mother looked at me, and said
Faint words of cheer, which only meant
That she could die and be content;
So I went forth from the same church door
To another husband's bed.
And this was he who died at last,
When weeks and months and years had passed,
Through which I firmly did fulfil
My duties, a devoted wife,
With the stern step of vanquished will
Walking beneath the night of life,
Whose hours extinguished, like slow rain
Falling forever, pain by pain,
The very hope of death's dear rest;

Which, since the heart within my breast
Of natural life was dispossessed,
Its strange sustainer there had been.

When flowers were dead, and grass was green
Upon my mother's grave — that mother
Whom to outlive, and cheer, and make
My wan eyes glitter for her sake,
Was my vowed task, the single care
Which once gave life to my despair —
When she was a thing that did not stir,
And the crawling worms were cradling her
To a sleep more deep and so more sweet
Than a baby's rocked on its nurse's knee,
I lived; a living pulse then beat
Beneath my heart that awakened me.
What was this pulse so warm and free?
Alas! I knew it could not be
My own dull blood. 'T was like a thought
Of liquid love, that spread and wrought
Under my bosom and in my brain,
And crept with the blood through every vein,
And hour by hour, day after day,
The wonder could not charm away
But laid in sleep my wakeful pain,
Until I knew it was a child,
And then I wept. For long, long years
These frozen eyes had shed no tears;
But now—'t was the season fair and mild
When April has wept itself to May;
I sate through the sweet sunny day
By my window bowered round with leaves,
And down my cheeks the quick tears ran
Like twinkling rain-drops from the eaves,
When warm spring showers are passing o'er.
O Helen, none can ever tell
The joy it was to weep once more!

I wept to think how hard it were
To kill my babe, and take from it
The sense of light, and the warm air,
And my own fond and tender care,
And love and smiles; ere I knew yet
That these for it might, as for me,
Be the masks of a grinning mockery.
And haply, I would dream, ‘t were sweet
To feed it from my faded breast,
Or mark my own heart’s restless beat
Rock it to its untroubled rest,
And watch the growing soul beneath
Dawn in faint smiles; and hear its breath,
Half interrupted by calm sighs,
And search the depth of its fair eyes
For long departed memories!
And so I lived till that sweet load
Was lightened. Darkly forward flowed
The stream of years, and on it bore
Two shapes of gladness to my sight;
Two other babes, delightful more,
In my lost soul’s abandoned night,
Than their own country ships may be
Sailing towards wrecked mariners
Who cling to the rock of a wintry sea.
For each, as it came, brought soothing tears;
And a loosening warmth, as each one lay
Sucking the sullen milk away,
About my frozen heart did play,
And weaned it, oh, how painfully —
As they themselves were weaned each one
From that sweet food — even from the thirst
Of death, and nothingness, and rest,
Strange inmate of a living breast,
Which all that I had undergone
Of grief and shame, since she who first
The gates of that dark refuge closed

Came to my sight, and almost burst
The seal of that Lethean spring —
But these fair shadows interposed.
For all delights are shadows now!
And from my brain to my dull brow
The heavy tears gather and flow.
I cannot speak — oh, let me weep!

The tears which fell from her wan eyes
Glimmered among the moonlight dew.
Her deep hard sobs and heavy sighs
Their echoes in the darkness threw.
When she grew calm, she thus did keep
The tenor of her tale: —

He died;
I know not how; he was not old,
If age be numbered by its years;
But he was bowed and bent with fears,
Pale with the quenchless thirst of gold,
Which, like fierce fever, left him weak;
And his strait lip and bloated cheek
Were warped in spasms by hollow sneers;
And selfish cares with barren plough,
Not age, had lined his narrow brow,
And foul and cruel thoughts, which feed
Upon the withering life within,
Like vipers on some poisonous weed.
Whether his ill were death or sin
None knew, until he died indeed,
And then men owned they were the same.

Seven days within my chamber lay
That corse, and my babes made holiday.
At last, I told them what is death.
The eldest, with a kind of shame,
Came to my knees with silent breath,

And sate awe-stricken at my feet;
And soon the others left their play,
And sate there too. It is unmeet
To shed on the brief flower of youth
The withering knowledge of the grave.
From me remorse then wrung that truth.
I could not bear the joy which gave
Too just a response to mine own.
In vain. I dared not feign a groan;
And in their artless looks I saw,
Between the mists of fear and awe,
That my own thought was theirs; and they
Expressed it not in words, but said,
Each in its heart, how every day
Will pass in happy work and play,
Now he is dead and gone away!

After the funeral all our kin
Assembled, and the will was read.
My friend, I tell thee, even the dead
Have strength, their putrid shrouds within,
To blast and torture. Those who live
Still fear the living, but a corse
Is merciless, and Power doth give
To such pale tyrants half the spoil
He rends from those who groan and toil,
Because they blush not with remorse
Among their crawling worms. Behold,
I have no child! my tale grows old
With grief, and staggers; let it reach
The limits of my feeble speech,
And languidly at length recline
On the brink of its own grave and mine.

Thou knowest what a thing is Poverty
Among the fallen on evil days.
‘T is Crime, and Fear, and Infamy,

And houseless Want in frozen ways
Wandering ungarmented, and Pain,
And, worse than all, that inward stain,
Foul Self-contempt, which drowns in sneers
Youth's starlight smile, and makes its tears
First like hot gall, then dry forever!
And well thou knowest a mother never
Could doom her children to this ill,
And well he knew the same. The will
Imported that, if e'er again
I sought my children to behold,
Or in my birthplace did remain
Beyond three days, whose hours were told,
They should inherit nought; and he,
To whom next came their patrimony,
A sallow lawyer, cruel and cold,
Aye watched me, as the will was read,
With eyes askance, which sought to see
The secrets of my agony;
And with close lips and anxious brow
Stood canvassing still to and fro
The chance of my resolve, and all
The dead man's caution just did call;
For in that killing lie 't was said —
'She is adulterous, and doth hold
In secret that the Christian creed
Is false, and therefore is much need
That I should have a care to save
My children from eternal fire.'
Friend, he was sheltered by the grave,
And therefore dared to be a liar!
In truth, the Indian on the pyre
Of her dead husband, half consumed,
As well might there be false as I
To those abhorred embraces doomed,
Far worse than fire's brief agony.
As to the Christian creed, if true

Or false, I never questioned it;
I took it as the vulgar do;
Nor my vexed soul had leisure yet
To doubt the things men say, or deem
That they are other than they seem.

All present who those crimes did hear,
In feigned or actual scorn and fear,
Men, women, children, slunk away,
Whispering with self-contented pride
Which half suspects its own base lie.
I spoke to none, nor did abide,
But silently I went my way,
Nor noticed I where joyously
Sate my two younger babes at play
In the courtyard through which I passed;
But went with footsteps firm and fast
Till I came to the brink of the ocean green,
And there, a woman with gray hairs,
Who had my mother's servant been,
Kneeling, with many tears and prayers,
Made me accept a purse of gold,
Half of the earnings she had kept
To refuge her when weak and old.
With woe, which never sleeps or slept,
I wander now. 'T is a vain thought —
But on yon Alp, whose snowy head
'Mid the azure air is islanded,
(We see it — o'er the flood of cloud,
Which sunrise from its eastern caves
Drives, wrinkling into golden waves,
Hung with its precipices proud —
From that gray stone where first we met)
There — now who knows the dead feel nought? —
Should be my grave; for he who yet
Is my soul's soul once said: ''T were sweet
'Mid stars and lightnings to abide,

And winds, and lulling snows that beat
With their soft flakes the mountain wide,
Where weary meteor lamps repose,
And languid storms their pinions close,
And all things strong and bright and pure,
And ever during, aye endure.
Who knows, if one were buried there,
But these things might our spirits make,
Amid the all-surrounding air,
Their own eternity partake?'
Then 't was a wild and playful saying
At which I laughed or seemed to laugh.
They were his words — now heed my praying,
And let them be my epitaph.
Thy memory for a term may be
My monument. Wilt remember me?
I know thou wilt; and canst forgive,
Whilst in this erring world to live
My soul disdained not, that I thought
Its lying forms were worthy aught,
And much less thee.

HELEN

Oh, speak not so!
But come to me and pour thy woe
Into this heart, full though it be,
Aye overflowing with its own.
I thought that grief had severed me
From all beside who weep and groan,
Its likeness upon earth to be —
Its express image; but thou art
More wretched. Sweet, we will not part
Henceforth, if death be not division;
If so, the dead feel no contrition.
But wilt thou hear, since last we parted,
All that has left me broken-hearted?

ROSALIND
Yes, speak. The faintest stars are scarcely shorn
Of their thin beams by that delusive morn
Which sinks again in darkness, like the light
Of early love, soon lost in total night.

HELEN
Alas! Italian winds are mild,
But my bosom is cold — wintry cold;
When the warm air weaves, among the fresh leaves,
Soft music, my poor brain is wild,
And I am weak like a nursling child,
Though my soul with grief is gray and old.

ROSALIND
Weep not at thine own words, though they must make
Me weep. What is thy tale?

HELEN
I fear ‘t will shake
Thy gentle heart with tears. Thou well
Rememberest when we met no more;
And, though I dwelt with Lionel,
That friendless caution pierced me sore
With grief; a wound my spirit bore
Indignantly — but when he died,
With him lay dead both hope and pride.

Alas! all hope is buried now.
But then men dreamed the aged earth
Was laboring in that mighty birth
Which many a poet and a sage
Has aye foreseen — the happy age
When truth and love shall dwell below
Among the works and ways of men;
Which on this world not power but will
Even now is wanting to fulfil.

Among mankind what thence befell
Of strife, how vain, is known too well;
When Liberty's dear pæan fell
'Mid murderous howls. To Lionel,
Though of great wealth and lineage high,
Yet through those dungeon walls there came
Thy thrilling light, O Liberty!
And as the meteor's midnight flame
Startles the dreamer, sun-like truth
Flashed on his visionary youth,
And filled him, not with love, but faith,
And hope, and courage mute in death;
For love and life in him were twins,
Born at one birth. In every other
First life, then love, its course begins,
Though they be children of one mother;
And so through this dark world they fleet
Divided, till in death they meet;
But he loved all things ever. Then
He passed amid the strife of men,
And stood at the throne of armèd power
Pleading for a world of woe.
Secure as one on a rock-built tower
O'er the wrecks which the surge trails to and fro,
'Mid the passions wild of humankind
He stood, like a spirit calming them;
For, it was said, his words could bind
Like music the lulled crowd, and stem
That torrent of unquiet dream
Which mortals truth and reason deem,
But is revenge and fear and pride.
Joyous he was; and hope and peace
On all who heard him did abide,
Raining like dew from his sweet talk,
As where the evening star may walk
Along the brink of the gloomy seas,
Liquid mists of splendor quiver.

His very gestures touched to tears
The unpersuaded tyrant, never
So moved before; his presence stung
The torturers with their victim's pain,
And none knew how; and through their ears
The subtle witchcraft of his tongue
Unlocked the hearts of those who keep
Gold, the world's bond of slavery.
Men wondered, and some sneered to see
One sow what he could never reap;
For he is rich, they said, and young,
And might drink from the depths of luxury.
If he seeks fame, fame never crowned
The champion of a trampled creed;
If he seeks power, power is enthroned
'Mid ancient rights and wrongs, to feed
Which hungry wolves with praise and spoil
Those who would sit near power must toil;
And such, there sitting, all may see.
What seeks he? All that others seek
He casts away, like a vile weed
Which the sea casts unreturningly.
That poor and hungry men should break
The laws which wreak them toil and scorn
We understand; but Lionel,
We know, is rich and nobly born.
So wondered they; yet all men loved
Young Lionel, though few approved;
All but the priests, whose hatred fell
Like the unseen blight of a smiling day,
The withering honey-dew which clings
Under the bright green buds of May
Whilst they unfold their emerald wings;
For he made verses wild and queer
On the strange creeds priests hold so dear
Because they bring them land and gold.
Of devils and saints and all such gear

He made tales which whoso heard or read
Would laugh till he were almost dead.
So this grew a proverb: ‘Don’t get old
Till Lionel’s *Banquet in Hell* you hear,
And then you will laugh yourself young again.’
So the priests hated him, and he
Repaid their hate with cheerful glee.

Ah, smiles and joyance quickly died,
For public hope grew pale and dim
In an altered time and tide,
And in its wasting withered him,
As a summer flower that blows too soon
Droops in the smile of the waning moon,
When it scatters through an April night
The frozen dews of wrinkling blight.
None now hoped more. Gray Power was seated
Safely on her ancestral throne;
And Faith, the Python, undefeated
Even to its blood-stained steps dragged on
Her foul and wounded train; and men
Were trampled and deceived again,
And words and shows again could bind
The wailing tribes of humankind
In scorn and famine. Fire and blood
Raged round the raging multitude,
To fields remote by tyrants sent
To be the scornèd instrument
With which they drag from mines of gore
The chains their slaves yet ever wore;
And in the streets men met each other,
And by old altars and in halls,
And smiled again at festivals.
But each man found in his heart’s brother
Cold cheer; for all, though half deceived,
The outworn creeds again believed,

And the same round anew began
Which the weary world yet ever ran.

Many then wept, not tears, but gall,
Within their hearts, like drops which fall
Wasting the fountain-stone away.
And in that dark and evil day
Did all desires and thoughts that claim
Men's care — ambition, friendship, fame,
Love, hope, though hope was now despair —
Indue the colors of this change,
As from the all-surrounding air
The earth takes hues obscure and strange,
When storm and earthquake linger there.

And so, my friend, it then befell
To many, — most to Lionel,
Whose hope was like the life of youth
Within him, and when dead became
A spirit of unresting flame,
Which goaded him in his distress
Over the world's vast wilderness.
Three years he left his native land,
And on the fourth, when he returned,
None knew him; he was stricken deep
With some disease of mind, and turned
Into aught unlike Lionel.
On him — on whom, did he pause in sleep,
Serenest smiles were wont to keep,
And, did he wake, a wingèd band
Of bright Persuasions, which had fed
On his sweet lips and liquid eyes,
Kept their swift pinions half outspread
To do on men his least command —
On him, whom once 't was paradise
Even to behold, now misery lay.
In his own heart 't was merciless —

To all things else none may express
Its innocence and tenderness.

‘T was said that he had refuge sought
In love from his unquiet thought
In distant lands, and been deceived
By some strange show; for there were found,
Blotted with tears — as those relieved
By their own words are wont to do —
These mournful verses on the ground,
By all who read them blotted too.

‘How am I changed! my hopes were once like fire;
I loved, and I believed that life was love.
How am I lost! on wings of swift desire
Among Heaven’s winds my spirit once did move.
I slept, and silver dreams did aye inspire
My liquid sleep; I woke, and did approve
All Nature to my heart, and thought to make
A paradise of earth for one sweet sake.

‘I love, but I believe in love no more.
I feel desire, but hope not. Oh, from sleep
Most vainly must my weary brain implore
Its long lost flattery now! I wake to weep,
And sit through the long day gnawing the core
Of my bitter heart, and, like a miser, keep —
Since none in what I feel take pain or pleasure —
To my own soul its self-consuming treasure.’

He dwelt beside me near the sea;
And oft in evening did we meet,
When the waves, beneath the starlight, flee
O’er the yellow sands with silver feet,
And talked. Our talk was sad and sweet,
Till slowly from his mien there passed
The desolation which it spoke;
And smiles — as when the lightning’s blast

Has parched some heaven-delighting oak,
The next spring shows leaves pale and rare,
But like flowers delicate and fair,
On its rent boughs — again arrayed
His countenance in tender light;
His words grew subtle fire, which made
The air his hearers breathed delight;
His motions, like the winds, were free,
Which bend the bright grass gracefully,
Then fade away in circlets faint;
And wingèd Hope — on which upborne
His soul seemed hovering in his eyes,
Like some bright spirit newly born
Floating amid the sunny skies —
Sprang forth from his rent heart anew.
Yet o'er his talk, and looks, and mien,
Tempering their loveliness too keen,
Past woe its shadow backward threw;
Till, like an exhalation spread
From flowers half drunk with evening dew,
They did become infectious — sweet
And subtle mists of sense and thought,
Which wrapped us soon, when we might meet,
Almost from our own looks and aught
The wild world holds. And so his mind
Was healed, while mine grew sick with fear;
For ever now his health declined,
Like some frail bark which cannot bear
The impulse of an altered wind,
Though prosperous; and my heart grew full,
'Mid its new joy, of a new care;
For his cheek became, not pale, but fair,
As rose-o'ershadowed lilies are;
And soon his deep and sunny hair,
In this alone less beautiful,
Like grass in tombs grew wild and rare.
The blood in his translucent veins

Beat, not like animal life, but love
Seemed now its sullen springs to move,
When life had failed, and all its pains;
And sudden sleep would seize him oft
Like death, so calm, — but that a tear,
His pointed eye-lashes between,
Would gather in the light serene
Of smiles whose lustre bright and soft
Beneath lay undulating there.
His breath was like inconstant flame
As eagerly it went and came;
And I hung o'er him in his sleep,
Till, like an image in the lake
Which rains disturb, my tears would break
The shadow of that slumber deep.
Then he would bid me not to weep,
And say, with flattery false yet sweet,
That death and he could never meet,
If I would never part with him.
And so we loved, and did unite
All that in us was yet divided;
For when he said, that many a rite,
By men to bind but once provided,
Could not be shared by him and me,
Or they would kill him in their glee,
I shuddered, and then laughing said —
'We will have rites our faith to bind,
But our church shall be the starry night,
Our altar the grassy earth outspread,
And our priest the muttering wind.'

'T was sunset as I spoke. One star
Had scarce burst forth, when from afar
The ministers of misrule sent
Seized upon Lionel, and bore
His chained limbs to a dreary tower,
In the midst of a city vast and wide.

For he, they said, from his mind had bent
Against their gods keen blasphemy,
For which, though his soul must roasted be
In hell's red lakes immortally,
Yet even on earth must he abide
The vengeance of their slaves: a trial,
I think, men call it. What avail
Are prayers and tears, which chase denial
From the fierce savage nursed in hate?
What the knit soul that pleading and pale
Makes wan the quivering cheek which late
It painted with its own delight?
We were divided. As I could,
I stilled the tingling of my blood,
And followed him in their despite,
As a widow follows, pale and wild,
The murderers and corse of her only child;
And when we came to the prison door,
And I prayed to share his dungeon floor
With prayers which rarely have been spurned,
And when men drove me forth, and I
Stared with blank frenzy on the sky, —
A farewell look of love he turned,
Half calming me; then gazed awhile,
As if through that black and massy pile,
And through the crowd around him there,
And through the dense and murky air,
And the thronged streets, he did espy
What poets know and prophesy;
And said, with voice that made them shiver
And clung like music in my brain,
And which the mute walls spoke again
Prolonging it with deepened strain —
'Fear not the tyrants shall rule forever,
Or the priests of the bloody faith;
They stand on the brink of that mighty river,
Whose waves they have tainted with death;

It is fed from the depths of a thousand dells,
Around them it foams, and rages, and swells,
And their swords and their sceptres I floating see,
Like wrecks, in the surge of eternity.'

I dwelt beside the prison gate;
And the strange crowd that out and in
Passed, some, no doubt, with mine own fate,
Might have fretted me with its ceaseless din,
But the fever of care was louder within.
Soon but too late, in penitence
Or fear, his foes released him thence.
I saw his thin and languid form,
As leaning on the jailor's arm,
Whose hardened eyes grew moist the while
To meet his mute and faded smile
And hear his words of kind farewell,
He tottered forth from his damp cell.
Many had never wept before,
From whom fast tears then gushed and fell;
Many will relent no more,
Who sobbed like infants then; ay, all
Who thronged the prison's stony hall,
The rulers or the slaves of law,
Felt with a new surprise and awe
That they were human, till strong shame
Made them again become the same.
The prison bloodhounds, huge and grim,
From human looks the infection caught,
And fondly crouched and fawned on him;
And men have heard the prisoners say,
Who in their rotting dungeons lay,
That from that hour, throughout one day,
The fierce despair and hate which kept
Their trampled bosoms almost slept,
Where, like twin vultures, they hung feeding
On each heart's wound, wide torn and bleeding, —

Because their jailors' rule, they thought,
Grew merciful, like a parent's sway.

I know not how, but we were free;
And Lionel sate alone with me,
As the carriage drove through the streets apace;
And we looked upon each other's face;
And the blood in our fingers intertwined
Ran like the thoughts of a single mind,
As the swift emotions went and came
Through the veins of each united frame.
So through the long, long streets we passed
Of the million-peopled City vast;
Which is that desert, where each one
Seeks his mate yet is alone,
Beloved and sought and mourned of none;
Until the clear blue sky was seen,
And the grassy meadows bright and green.
And then I sunk in his embrace
Enclosing there a mighty space
Of love; and so we travelled on
By woods, and fields of yellow flowers,
And towns, and villages, and towers,
Day after day of happy hours.
It was the azure time of June,
When the skies are deep in the stainless noon,
And the warm and fitful breezes shake
The fresh green leaves of the hedge-row briar;
And there were odors then to make
The very breath we did respire
A liquid element, whereon
Our spirits, like delighted things
That walk the air on subtle wings,
Floated and mingled far away
'Mid the warm winds of the sunny day.
And when the evening star came forth
Above the curve of the new bent moon,

And light and sound ebbed from the earth,
Like the tide of the full and the weary sea
To the depths of its own tranquillity,
Our natures to its own repose
Did the earth's breathless sleep attune;
Like flowers, which on each other close
Their languid leaves when daylight's gone,
We lay, till new emotions came,
Which seemed to make each mortal frame
One soul of interwoven flame,
A life in life, a second birth
In worlds diviner far than earth; —
Which, like two strains of harmony
That mingle in the silent sky,
Then slowly disunite, passed by
And left the tenderness of tears,
A soft oblivion of all fears,
A sweet sleep: — so we travelled on
Till we came to the home of Lionel,
Among the mountains wild and lone,
Beside the hoary western sea,
Which near the verge of the echoing shore
The massy forest shadowed o'er.

The ancient steward with hair all hoar,
As we alighted, wept to see
His master changed so fearfully;
And the old man's sobs did waken me
From my dream of unremaining gladness;
The truth flashed o'er me like quick madness
When I looked, and saw that there was death
On Lionel. Yet day by day
He lived, till fear grew hope and faith,
And in my soul I dared to say,
Nothing so bright can pass away;
Death is dark, and foul, and dull,
But he is — oh, how beautiful!

Yet day by day he grew more weak,
And his sweet voice, when he might speak,
Which ne'er was loud, became more low;
And the light which flashed through his waxen cheek
Grew faint, as the rose-like hues which flow
From sunset o'er the Alpine snow;
And death seemed not like death in him,
For the spirit of life o'er every limb
Lingered, a mist of sense and thought.
When the summer wind faint odors brought
From mountain flowers, even as it passed,
His cheek would change, as the noonday sea
Which the dying breeze sweeps fitfully.
If but a cloud the sky o'ercast,
You might see his color come and go,
And the softest strain of music made
Sweet smiles, yet sad, arise and fade
Amid the dew of his tender eyes;
And the breath, with intermitting flow,
Made his pale lips quiver and part.
You might hear the beatings of his heart,
Quick but not strong; and with my tresses
When oft he playfully would bind
In the bowers of mossy lonelinesses
His neck, and win me so to mingle
In the sweet depth of woven caresses,
And our faint limbs were intertwined, —
Alas! the unquiet life did tingle
From mine own heart through every vein,
Like a captive in dreams of liberty,
Who beats the walls of his stony cell.
But his, it seemed already free,
Like the shadow of fire surrounding me!
On my faint eyes and limbs did dwell
That spirit as it passed, till soon —
As a frail cloud wandering o'er the moon,
Beneath its light invisible,

Is seen when it folds its gray wings again
To alight on midnight's dusky plain —
I lived and saw, and the gathering soul
Passed from beneath that strong control,
And I fell on a life which was sick with fear
Of all the woe that now I bear.

Amid a bloomless myrtle wood,
On a green and sea-girt promontory
Not far from where we dwelt, there stood,
In record of a sweet sad story,
An altar and a temple bright
Circled by steps, and o'er the gate
Was sculptured, 'To Fidelity;'
And in the shrine an image sate
All veiled; but there was seen the light
Of smiles which faintly could express
A mingled pain and tenderness
Through that ethereal drapery.
The left hand held the head, the right —
Beyond the veil, beneath the skin,
You might see the nerves quivering within —
Was forcing the point of a barbèd dart
Into its side-convulsing heart.
An unskilled hand, yet one informed
With genius, had the marble warmed
With that pathetic life. This tale
It told: A dog had from the sea,
When the tide was raging fearfully,
Dragged Lionel's mother, weak and pale,
Then died beside her on the sand,
And she that temple thence had planned;
But it was Lionel's own hand
Had wrought the image. Each new moon
That lady did, in this lone fane,
The rites of a religion sweet
Whose god was in her heart and brain.

The seasons' loveliest flowers were strewn
On the marble floor beneath her feet,
And she brought crowns of sea-buds white
Whose odor is so sweet and faint,
And weeds, like branching chrysolite,
Woven in devices fine and quaint;
And tears from her brown eyes did stain
The altar; need but look upon
That dying statue, fair and wan,
If tears should cease, to weep again;
And rare Arabian odors came,
Through the myrtle copses, steaming thence
From the hissing frankincense,
Whose smoke, wool-white as ocean foam,
Hung in dense flocks beneath the dome —
That ivory dome, whose azure night
With golden stars, like heaven, was bright
O'er the split cedar's pointed flame;
And the lady's harp would kindle there
The melody of an old air,
Softer than sleep; the villagers
Mixed their religion up with hers,
And, as they listened round, shed tears.

One eve he led me to this fane.
Daylight on its last purple cloud
Was lingering gray, and soon her strain
The nightingale began; now loud,
Climbing in circles the windless sky,
Now dying music; suddenly
'T is scattered in a thousand notes;
And now to the hushed ear it floats
Like field-smells known in infancy,
Then, failing, soothes the air again.
We sate within that temple lone,
Pavilioned round with Parian stone;
His mother's harp stood near, and oft

I had awakened music soft
Amid its wires; the nightingale
Was pausing in her heaven-taught tale.
‘Now drain the cup,’ said Lionel,
‘Which the poet-bird has crowned so well
With the wine of her bright and liquid song!
Heard’st thou not sweet words among
That heaven-resounding minstrelsy?
Heard’st thou not that those who die
Awake in a world of ecstasy?
That love, when limbs are interwoven,
And sleep, when the night of life is cloven,
And thought, to the world’s dim boundaries clinging,
And music, when one beloved is singing,
Is death? Let us drain right joyously
The cup which the sweet bird fills for me.’
He paused, and to my lips he bent
His own; like spirit his words went
Through all my limbs with the speed of fire;
And his keen eyes, glittering through mine,
Filled me with the flame divine
Which in their orbs was burning far,
Like the light of an unmeasured star
In the sky of midnight dark and deep;
Yes, ‘t was his soul that did inspire
Sounds which my skill could ne’er awaken;
And first, I felt my fingers sweep
The harp, and a long quivering cry
Burst from my lips in symphony;
The dusk and solid air was shaken,
As swift and swifter the notes came
From my touch, that wandered like quick flame,
And from my bosom, laboring
With some unutterable thing.
The awful sound of my own voice made
My faint lips tremble; in some mood
Of wordless thought Lionel stood

So pale, that even beside his cheek
The snowy column from its shade
Caught whiteness; yet his countenance,
Raised upward, burned with radiance
Of spirit-piercing joy whose light,
Like the moon struggling through the night
Of whirlwind-rifted clouds, did break
With beams that might not be confined.
I paused, but soon his gestures kindled
New power, as by the moving wind
The waves are lifted; and my song
To low soft notes now changed and dwindled,
And, from the twinkling wires among,
My languid fingers drew and flung
Circles of life-dissolving sound,
Yet faint; in aëry rings they bound
My Lionel, who, as every strain
Grew fainter but more sweet, his mien
Sunk with the sound relaxedly;
And slowly now he turned to me,
As slowly faded from his face
That awful joy; with look serene
He was soon drawn to my embrace,
And my wild song then died away
In murmurs; words I dare not say
We mixed, and on his lips mine fed
Till they methought felt still and cold.
‘What is it with thee, love?’ I said;
No word, no look, no motion! yes,
There was a change, but spare to guess,
Nor let that moment’s hope be told.
I looked, — and knew that he was dead;
And fell, as the eagle on the plain
Falls when life deserts her brain,
And the mortal lightning is veiled again.

Oh, that I were now dead! but such —
Did they not, love, demand too much,
Those dying murmurs? — he forbade.
Oh, that I once again were mad!
And yet, dear Rosalind, not so,
For I would live to share thy woe.
Sweet boy! did I forget thee too?
Alas, we know not what we do
When we speak words.

No memory more
Is in my mind of that sea-shore.
Madness came on me, and a troop
Of misty shapes did seem to sit
Beside me, on a vessel's poop,
And the clear north wind was driving it.
Then I heard strange tongues, and saw strange flowers,
And the stars methought grew unlike ours,
And the azure sky and the stormless sea
Made me believe that I had died
And waked in a world which was to me
Drear hell, though heaven to all beside.
Then a dead sleep fell on my mind,
Whilst animal life many long years
Had rescued from a chasm of tears;
And, when I woke, I wept to find
That the same lady, bright and wise,
With silver locks and quick brown eyes,
The mother of my Lionel,
Had tended me in my distress,
And died some months before. Nor less
Wonder, but far more peace and joy,
Brought in that hour my lovely boy.
For through that trance my soul had well
The impress of thy being kept;
And if I waked or if I slept,
No doubt, though memory faithless be,

Thy image ever dwelt on me;
And thus, O Lionel, like thee
Is our sweet child. ‘T is sure most strange
I knew not of so great a change
As that which gave him birth, who now
Is all the solace of my woe.

That Lionel great wealth had left
By will to me, and that of all
The ready lies of law bereft
My child and me, — might well befall.
But let me think not of the scorn
Which from the meanest I have borne,
When, for my child’s belovèd sake,
I mixed with slaves, to vindicate
The very laws themselves do make;
Let me not say scorn is my fate,
Lest I be proud, suffering the same
With those who live in deathless fame.

She ceased.—’Lo, where red morning through the woods
Is burning o’er the dew!’ said Rosalind.
And with these words they rose, and towards the flood
Of the blue lake, beneath the leaves, now wind
With equal steps and fingers intertwined.
Thence to a lonely dwelling, where the shore
Is shadowed with steep rocks, and cypresses
Cleave with their dark green cones the silent skies
And with their shadows the clear depths below,

And where a little terrace from its bowers
Of blooming myrtle and faint lemon flowers
Scatters its sense-dissolving fragrance o’er
The liquid marble of the windless lake;
And where the aged forest’s limbs look hoar
Under the leaves which their green garments make,
They come. ‘T is Helen’s home, and clean and white,

Like one which tyrants spare on our own land
In some such solitude; its casements bright
Shone through their vine-leaves in the morning sun,
And even within ‘t was scarce like Italy.
And when she saw how all things there were planned
As in an English home, dim memory
Disturbed poor Rosalind; she stood as one
Whose mind is where his body cannot be,
Till Helen led her where her child yet slept,
And said, ‘Observe, that brow was Lionel’s,
Those lips were his, and so he ever kept
One arm in sleep, pillowing his head with it.
You cannot see his eyes — they are two wells
Of liquid love. Let us not wake him yet.’
But Rosalind could bear no more, and wept
A shower of burning tears which fell upon
His face, and so his opening lashes shone
With tears unlike his own, as he did leap
In sudden wonder from his innocent sleep.

So Rosalind and Helen lived together
Thenceforth — changed in all else, yet friends again,
Such as they were, when o’er the mountain heather
They wandered in their youth through sun and rain.
And after many years, for human things
Change even like the ocean and the wind,
Her daughter was restored to Rosalind,
And in their circle thence some visitings
Of joy ‘mid their new calm would intervene.
A lovely child she was, of looks serene,
And motions which o’er things indifferent shed
The grace and gentleness from whence they came.
And Helen’s boy grew with her, and they fed
From the same flowers of thought, until each mind
Like springs which mingle in one flood became;
And in their union soon their parents saw
The shadow of the peace denied to them.

And Rosalind — for when the living stem
Is cankered in its heart, the tree must fall —
Died ere her time; and with deep grief and awe
The pale survivors followed her remains
Beyond the region of dissolving rains,
Up the cold mountain she was wont to call
Her tomb; and on Chiavenna's precipice
They raised a pyramid of lasting ice,
Whose polished sides, ere day had yet begun,
Caught the first glow of the unrisen sun,
The last, when it had sunk; and through the night
The charioteers of Arctos wheelèd round
Its glittering point, as seen from Helen's home,
Whose sad inhabitants each year would come,
With willing steps climbing that rugged height,
And hang long locks of hair, and garlands bound
With amaranth flowers, which, in the clime's despite,
Filled the frore air with unaccustomed light;
Such flowers as in the wintry memory bloom
Of one friend left adorned that frozen tomb.

Helen, whose spirit was of softer mould,
Whose sufferings too were less, death slowlier led
Into the peace of his dominion cold.
She died among her kindred, being old.
And know, that if love die not in the dead
As in the living, none of mortal kind
Are blessed as now Helen and Rosalind.

JULIAN AND MADDALO: A CONVERSATION

The meadows with fresh streams, the bees with thyme,
The goats with the green leaves of budding Spring,
Are saturated not — nor Love with tears.
VIRGIL'S *Gallus.*

Julian and Maddalo is the fruit of Shelley's first visit to Venice in 1818, where he found Byron, and the poem is a reflection of their companionship, *Julian* standing for Shelley, *Maddalo* for Byron, and the child being Byron's daughter, Allegra. It was written in the fall, at Este, and received its last revision in May, 1819, but was not published, notwithstanding some efforts of Shelley to bring it out, until after his death, when it was included in the *Posthumous Poems,* 1824. Shelley had it in mind to write three other similar poems, laying the scenes at Rome, Florence and Naples, but he did not carry out the plan. He once refers to the tale, or 'conversation' as among 'his saddest verses;' but his important comment on it is contained in a letter to Hunt, August 15, 1819:

'I send you a little poem to give to Ollier for publication, but *without my name.* Peacock will correct the proofs. I wrote it with the idea of offering it to the *Examiner,* but I find it is too long. It was composed last year at Este; two of the characters you will recognize; and the third is also in some degree a painting from nature, but, with respect to time and place, ideal. You will find the little piece, I think, in some degree consistent with your own ideas of the manner in which poetry ought to be written. I have employed a certain familiar style of language to express the actual way in which people talk with each other, whom education and a certain refinement of sentiment have placed above the use of vulgar idioms. I use the word *vulgar* in its most extensive sense. The vulgarity of rank and fashion is as gross in its way as that of poverty, and its cant terms equally expressive of base conceptions, and, therefore, equally unfit for poetry. Not that the familiar style is to be admitted in the treatment of a subject wholly ideal, or in that part of any subject which relates to common life, where the passion, exceeding a certain limit, touches the boundaries of that which is

ideal. Strong passion expresses itself in metaphor, borrowed from objects alike remote or near, and casts over all the shadow of its own greatness. But what am I about? If my grandmother sucks eggs, was it I who taught her?

If *you* would really correct the proof, I need not trouble Peacock, who, I suppose, has enough. Can you take it as a compliment that I prefer to trouble you?

'I do not particularly wish this poem to be known as mine; but, at all events, I would not put my name to it. I leave you to judge whether it is best to throw it into the fire, or to publish it. So much for self — *self,* that burr that will stick to one.'

Lord Byron, (1788 – 19 April 1824) was a leading figure in the Romantic movement and a close friend of Shelley.

Author's Preface

COUNT MADDALO is a Venetian nobleman of ancient family and of great fortune, who, without mixing much in the society of his countrymen, resides chiefly at his magnificent palace in that city. He is a person of the most consummate genius, and capable, if he would direct his energies to such an end, of becoming the redeemer of his degraded country. But it is his weakness to be proud. He derives, from a comparison of his own extraordinary mind with the dwarfish intellects that surround him, an intense apprehension of the nothingness of human life. His passions and his powers are incomparably greater than those of other men; and, instead of the latter having been employed in curbing the former, they have mutually lent each other strength. His ambition preys upon itself, for want of objects which it can consider worthy of exertion. I say that Maddalo is proud, because I can find no other word to express the concentred and impatient feelings which consume him; but it is on his own hopes and affections only that he seems to trample, for in social life no human being can be more gentle, patient and unassuming than Maddalo. He is cheerful, frank and witty. His more serious conversation is a sort of intoxication; men are held by it as by a spell. He has travelled much; and there is an inexpressible charm in his relation of his adventures in different countries.

Julian is an Englishman of good family, passionately attached to those philosophical notions which assert the power of man over his own mind, and the immense improvements of which, by the extinction of certain moral superstitions, human society may be yet susceptible. Without concealing the evil in the world he is forever speculating how good may be made superior. He is a complete infidel and a scoffer at all things reputed holy; and Maddalo takes a wicked pleasure in drawing out his taunts against religion. What Maddalo thinks on these matters is not exactly known. Julian, in spite of his heterodox opinions, is conjectured by his friends to possess some good qualities. How far this is possible the pious reader will determine. Julian is rather serious.

Of the Maniac I can give no information. He seems, by his own account, to have been disappointed in love. He was evidently a very cultivated and amiable person when in his right senses. His story, told at length, might be

like many other stories of the same kind. The unconnected exclamations of his agony will perhaps be found a sufficient comment for the text of every heart.

Julian and Maddalo: A Conversation.

I RODE one evening with Count Maddalo
Upon the bank of land which breaks the flow
Of Adria towards Venice. A bare strand
Of hillocks, heaped from ever-shifting sand,
Matted with thistles and amphibious weeds,
Such as from earth's embrace the salt ooze breeds,
Is this; an uninhabited sea-side,
Which the lone fisher, when his nets are dried,
Abandons; and no other object breaks
The waste but one dwarf tree and some few stakes
Broken and unrepaired, and the tide makes
A narrow space of level sand thereon,
Where 't was our wont to ride while day went down.
This ride was my delight. I love all waste
And solitary places; where we taste
The pleasure of believing what we see
Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be;
And such was this wide ocean, and this shore
More barren than its billows; and yet more
Than all, with a remembered friend I love
To ride as then I rode; — for the winds drove
The living spray along the sunny air
Into our faces; the blue heavens were bare,
Stripped to their depths by the awakening north;
And from the waves sound like delight broke forth
Harmonizing with solitude, and sent
Into our hearts aërial merriment.
So, as we rode, we talked; and the swift thought,
Winging itself with laughter, lingered not,
But flew from brain to brain, — such glee was ours,
Charged with light memories of remembered hours,
None slow enough for sadness; till we came
Homeward, which always makes the spirit tame.
This day had been cheerful but cold, and now

The sun was sinking, and the wind also.
Our talk grew somewhat serious, as may be
Talk interrupted with such raillery
As mocks itself, because it cannot scorn
The thoughts it would extinguish. ‘T was forlorn,
Yet pleasing; such as once, so poets tell,
The devils held within the dales of Hell,
Concerning God, freewill and destiny;
Of all that earth has been, or yet may be,
All that vain men imagine or believe,
Or hope can paint, or suffering may achieve,
We descanted; and I (for ever still
Is it not wise to make the best of ill?)
Argued against despondency, but pride
Made my companion take the darker side.
The sense that he was greater than his kind
Had struck, methinks, his eagle spirit blind
By gazing on its own exceeding light.
Meanwhile the sun paused ere it should alight,
Over the horizon of the mountains. Oh,
How beautiful is sunset, when the glow
Of Heaven descends upon a land like thee,
Thou Paradise of exiles, Italy!
Thy mountains, seas and vineyards and the towers
Of cities they encircle! — It was ours
To stand on thee, beholding it; and then,
Just where we had dismounted, the Count’s men
Were waiting for us with the gondola.
As those who pause on some delightful way
Though bent on pleasant pilgrimage, we stood
Looking upon the evening, and the flood,
Which lay between the city and the shore,
Paved with the image of the sky. The hoar
And aëry Alps towards the north appeared,
Through mist, an heaven-sustaining bulwark reared
Between the east and west; and half the sky
Was roofed with clouds of rich emblazonry,

Dark purple at the zenith, which still grew
Down the steep west into a wondrous hue
Brighter than burning gold, even to the rent
Where the swift sun yet paused in his descent
Among the many-folded hills. They were
Those famous Euganean hills, which bear,
As seen from Lido through the harbor piles,
The likeness of a clump of peakèd isles;
And then, as if the earth and sea had been
Dissolved into one lake of fire, were seen
Those mountains towering as from waves of flame
Around the vaporous sun, from which there came
The inmost purple spirit of light, and made
Their very peaks transparent. ‘Ere it fade,’
Said my companion, ‘I will show you soon
A better station.’ So, o’er the lagune
We glided; and from that funereal bark
I leaned, and saw the city, and could mark
How from their many isles, in evening’s gleam,
Its temples and its palaces did seem
Like fabrics of enchantment piled to Heaven.
I was about to speak, when—’We are even
Now at the point I meant,’ said Maddalo,
And bade the gondolieri cease to row.
‘Look, Julian, on the west, and listen well
If you hear not a deep and heavy bell.’
I looked, and saw between us and the sun
A building on an island, — such a one
As age to age might add, for uses vile,
A windowless, deformed and dreary pile;
And on the top an open tower, where hung
A bell, which in the radiance swayed and swung;
We could just hear its hoarse and iron tongue;
The broad sun sunk behind it, and it tolled
In strong and black relief. ‘What we behold
Shall be the madhouse and its belfry tower,’
Said Maddalo; ‘and ever at this hour

Those who may cross the water hear that bell,
Which calls the maniacs each one from his cell
To vespers.'—'As much skill as need to pray
In thanks or hope for their dark lot have they
To their stern Maker,' I replied. 'O ho!
You talk as in years past,' said Maddalo.
''T is strange men change not. You were ever still
Among Christ's flock a perilous infidel,
A wolf for the meek lambs — if you can't swim,
Beware of Providence.' I looked on him,
But the gay smile had faded in his eye, —
'And such,' he cried, 'is our mortality;
And this must be the emblem and the sign
Of what should be eternal and divine!
And, like that black and dreary bell, the soul,
Hung in a heaven-illumined tower, must toll
Our thoughts and our desires to meet below
Round the rent heart and pray — as madmen do
For what? they know not, till the night of death,
As sunset that strange vision, severeth
Our memory from itself, and us from all
We sought, and yet were baffled.' I recall
The sense of what he said, although I mar
The force of his expressions. The broad star
Of day meanwhile had sunk behind the hill,
And the black bell became invisible,
And the red tower looked gray, and all between,
The churches, ships and palaces were seen
Huddled in gloom; into the purple sea
The orange hues of heaven sunk silently.
We hardly spoke, and soon the gondola
Conveyed me to my lodgings by the way.
The following morn was rainy, cold, and dim.
Ere Maddalo arose, I called on him,
And whilst I waited, with his child I played.
A lovelier toy sweet Nature never made;
A serious, subtle, wild, yet gentle being,

Graceful without design, and unforeseeing,
With eyes — oh, speak not of her eyes! — which seem
Twin mirrors of Italian heaven, yet gleam
With such deep meaning as we never see
But in the human countenance. With me
She was a special favorite; I had nursed
Her fine and feeble limbs when she came first
To this bleak world; and she yet seemed to know
On second sight her ancient playfellow,
Less changed than she was by six months or so;
For, after her first shyness was worn out,
We sate there, rolling billiard balls about,
When the Count entered. Salutations past —
'The words you spoke last night might well have cast
A darkness on my spirit. If man be
The passive thing you say, I should not see
Much harm in the religions and old saws,
(Though I may never own such leaden laws)
Which break a teachless nature to the yoke.
Mine is another faith.' Thus much I spoke,
And noting he replied not, added: 'See
This lovely child, blithe, innocent and free;
She spends a happy time with little care,
While we to such sick thoughts subjected are
As came on you last night. It is our will
That thus enchains us to permitted ill.
We might be otherwise, we might be all
We dream of happy, high, majestical.
Where is the love, beauty and truth we seek,
But in our mind? and if we were not weak,
Should we be less in deed than in desire?'
'Ay, if we were not weak — and we aspire
How vainly to be strong!' said Maddalo;
'You talk Utopia.' 'It remains to know,'
I then rejoined, 'and those who try may find
How strong the chains are which our spirit bind;
Brittle perchance as straw. We are assured

Much may be conquered, much may be endured
Of what degrades and crushes us. We know
That we have power over ourselves to do
And suffer — what, we know not till we try;
But something nobler than to live and die.
So taught those kings of old philosophy,
Who reigned before religion made men blind;
And those who suffer with their suffering kind
Yet feel this faith religion.' 'My dear friend,'
Said Maddalo, 'my judgment will not bend
To your opinion, though I think you might
Make such a system refutation-tight
As far as words go. I knew one like you,
Who to this city came some months ago,
With whom I argued in this sort, and he
Is now gone mad, — and so he answered me, —
Poor fellow! but if you would like to go,
We 'll visit him, and his wild talk will show
How vain are such aspiring theories.'
'I hope to prove the induction otherwise,
And that a want of that true theory still,
Which seeks "a soul of goodness" in things ill,
Or in himself or others, has thus bowed
His being. There are some by nature proud,
Who patient in all else demand but this —
To love and be beloved with gentleness;
And, being scorned, what wonder if they die
Some living death? this is not destiny
But man's own wilful ill.'

As thus I spoke,
Servants announced the gondola, and we
Through the fast-falling rain and high-wrought sea
Sailed to the island where the madhouse stands.
We disembarked. The clap of tortured hands,
Fierce yells and howlings and lamentings keen,
And laughter where complaint had merrier been,

Moans, shrieks, and curses, and blaspheming prayers,
Accosted us. We climbed the oozy stairs
Into an old courtyard. I heard on high,
Then, fragments of most touching melody,
But looking up saw not the singer there.
Through the black bars in the tempestuous air
I saw, like weeds on a wrecked palace growing,
Long tangled locks flung wildly forth, and flowing,
Of those who on a sudden were beguiled
Into strange silence, and looked forth and smiled
Hearing sweet sounds. Then I: 'Methinks there were
A cure of these with patience and kind care,
If music can thus move. But what is he,
Whom we seek here?' 'Of his sad history
I know but this,' said Maddalo: 'he came
To Venice a dejected man, and fame
Said he was wealthy, or he had been so.
Some thought the loss of fortune wrought him woe;
But he was ever talking in such sort
As you do — far more sadly; he seemed hurt,
Even as a man with his peculiar wrong,
To hear but of the oppression of the strong,
Or those absurd deceits (I think with you
In some respects, you know) which carry through
The excellent impostors of this earth
When they outface detection. He had worth,
Poor fellow! but a humorist in his way.'
'Alas, what drove him mad?' 'I cannot say;
A lady came with him from France, and when
She left him and returned, he wandered then
About yon lonely isles of desert sand
Till he grew wild. He had no cash or land
Remaining; the police had brought him here;
Some fancy took him and he would not bear
Removal; so I fitted up for him
Those rooms beside the sea, to please his whim,
And sent him busts and books and urns for flowers,

Which had adorned his life in happier hours,
And instruments of music. You may guess
A stranger could do little more or less
For one so gentle and unfortunate;
And those are his sweet strains which charm the weight
From madmen's chains, and make this Hell appear
A heaven of sacred silence, hushed to hear.'
'Nay, this was kind of you; he had no claim,
As the world says.' 'None — but the very same
Which I on all mankind, were I as he
Fallen to such deep reverse. His melody
Is interrupted; now we hear the din
Of madmen, shriek on shriek, again begin.
Let us now visit him; after this strain
He ever communes with himself again,
And sees nor hears not any.' Having said
These words, we called the keeper, and he led
To an apartment opening on the sea.
There the poor wretch was sitting mournfully
Near a piano, his pale fingers twined
One with the other, and the ooze and wind
Rushed through an open casement, and did sway
His hair, and starred it with the brackish spray;
His head was leaning on a music-book,
And he was muttering, and his lean limbs shook;
His lips were pressed against a folded leaf,
In hue too beautiful for health, and grief
Smiled in their motions as they lay apart.
As one who wrought from his own fervid heart
The eloquence of passion, soon he raised
His sad meek face, and eyes lustrous and glazed,
And spoke — sometimes as one who wrote, and thought
His words might move some heart that heeded not,
If sent to distant lands; and then as one
Reproaching deeds never to be undone
With wondering self-compassion; then his speech
Was lost in grief, and then his words came each

Unmodulated, cold, expressionless,
But that from one jarred accent you might guess
It was despair made them so uniform;
And all the while the loud and gusty storm
Hissed through the window, and we stood behind
Stealing his accents from the envious wind
Unseen. I yet remember what he said
Distinctly; such impression his words made.

'Month after month,' he cried, 'to bear this load,
And, as a jade urged by the whip and goad,
To drag life on — which like a heavy chain
Lengthens behind with many a link of pain! —
And not to speak my grief — oh, not to dare
To give a human voice to my despair,
But live, and move, and, wretched thing! smile on
As if I never went aside to groan;

And wear this mask of falsehood even to those
Who are most dear — not for my own repose —
Alas, no scorn or pain or hate could be
So heavy as that falsehood is to me!
But that I cannot bear more altered faces
Than needs must be, more changed and cold embraces,
More misery, disappointment and mistrust
To own me for their father. Would the dust
Were covered in upon my body now!
That the life ceased to toil within my brow!
And then these thoughts would at the least be fled;
Let us not fear such pain can vex the dead.

'What Power delights to torture us? I know
That to myself I do not wholly owe
What now I suffer, though in part I may.
Alas! none strewed sweet flowers upon the way
Where, wandering heedlessly, I met pale Pain,
My shadow, which will leave me not again.

If I have erred, there was no joy in error,
But pain and insult and unrest and terror;
I have not, as some do, bought penitence
With pleasure, and a dark yet sweet offence;
For then — if love and tenderness and truth
Had overlived hope's momentary youth,
My creed should have redeemed me from repenting;
But loathèd scorn and outrage unrelenting
Met love excited by far other seeming
Until the end was gained; as one from dreaming
Of sweetest peace, I woke, and found my state
Such as it is —

'O Thou my spirit's mate!
Who, for thou art compassionate and wise,
Wouldst pity me from thy most gentle eyes
If this sad writing thou shouldst ever see —
My secret groans must be unheard by thee;
Thou wouldst weep tears bitter as blood to know
Thy lost friend's incommunicable woe.
'Ye few by whom my nature has been weighed
In friendship, let me not that name degrade
By placing on your hearts the secret load
Which crushes mine to dust. There is one road
To peace, and that is truth, which follow ye!
Love sometimes leads astray to misery.
Yet think not, though subdued — and I may well
Say that I am subdued — that the full hell
Within me would infect the untainted breast
Of sacred Nature with its own unrest;
As some perverted beings think to find
In soorn or hate a medicine for the mind
Which soorn or hate have wounded — oh, how vain!
The dagger heals not, but may rend again!
Believe that I am ever still the same
In creed as in resolve; and what may tame
My heart must leave the understanding free,

Or all would sink in this keen agony;
Nor dream that I will join the vulgar cry;
Or with my silence sanction tyranny;
Or seek a moment's shelter from my pain
In any madness which the world calls gain,
Ambition or revenge or thoughts as stern
As those which make me what I am; or turn
To avarice or misanthropy or lust.
Heap on me soon, O grave, thy welcome dust!
Till then the dungeon may demand its prey,
And Poverty and Shame may meet and say,
Halting beside me on the public way,
"That love-devoted youth is ours; let 's sit
Beside him; he may live some six months yet."
Or the red scaffold, as our country bends,
May ask some willing victim; or ye, friends,
May fall under some sorrow, which this heart
Or hand may share or vanquish or avert;
I am prepared — in truth, with no proud joy,
To do or suffer aught, as when a boy
I did devote to justice and to love
My nature, worthless now! —

'I must remove
A veil from my pent mind. 'T is torn aside!
O pallid as Death's dedicated bride,
Thou mockery which art sitting by my side,
Am I not wan like thee? at the grave's call
I haste, invited to thy wedding-ball,
To greet the ghastly paramour for whom
Thou hast deserted me — and made the tomb
Thy bridal bed — but I beside your feet
Will lie and watch ye from my winding-sheet —
Thus — wide-awake though dead — yet stay, oh, stay!
Go not so soon — know not what I say —
Hear but my reasons — I am mad, I fear,
My fancy is o'erwrought — thou art not here;

Pale art thou, ‘t is most true — but thou art gone,
Thy work is finished — I am left alone.
. . . . . .
‘Nay, was it I who wooed thee to this breast,
Which like a serpent thou envenomest
As in repayment of the warmth it lent?
Didst thou not seek me for thine own content?
Did not thy love awaken mine? I thought
That thou wert she who said “You kiss me not
Ever; I fear you do not love me now” —
In truth I loved even to my overthrow
Her who would fain forget these words; but they
Cling to her mind, and cannot pass away.
. . . . . .
‘You say that I am proud — that when I speak
My lip is tortured with the wrongs which break
The spirit it expresses. — Never one
Humbled himself before, as I have done!
Even the instinctive worm on which we tread
Turns, though it wound not — then with prostrate head
Sinks in the dust and writhes like me — and dies?
No: wears a living death of agonies!
As the slow shadows of the pointed grass
Mark the eternal periods, his pangs pass,
Slow, ever-moving, making moments be
As mine seem, — each an immortality!
. . . . . .
‘That you had never seen me — never heard
My voice, and more than all had ne’er endured
The deep pollution of my loathed embrace —
That your eyes ne’er had lied love in my face —
That, like some maniac monk, I had torn out
The nerves of manhood by their bleeding root
With mine own quivering fingers, so that ne’er
Our hearts had for a moment mingled there
To disunite in horror — these were not
With thee like some suppressed and hideous thought

Which flits athwart our musings but can find
No rest within a pure and gentle mind;
Thou sealedst them with many a bare broad word,
And sear'dst my memory o'er them, — for I heard
And can forget not; — they were ministered
One after one, those curses. Mix them up
Like self-destroying poisons in one cup,
And they will make one blessing, which thou ne'er
Didst imprecate for on me, — death.
. . . . . .
'It were
A cruel punishment for one most cruel,
If such can love, to make that love the fuel
Of the mind's hell — hate, scorn, remorse, despair;
But *me,* whose heart a stranger's tear might wear
As water-drops the sandy fountain-stone,
Who loved and pitied all things, and could moan
For woes which others hear not, and could see
The absent with the glance of fantasy,
And with the poor and trampled sit and weep,
Following the captive to his dungeon deep;
Me — who am as a nerve o'er which do creep
The else unfelt oppressions of this earth,
And was to thee the flame upon thy hearth,
When all beside was cold: — that thou on me
Shouldst rain these plagues of blistering agony!
Such curses are from lips once eloquent
With love's too partial praise! Let none relent
Who intend deeds too dreadful for a name
Henceforth, if an example for the same
They seek: — for thou on me look'dst so, and so —
And didst speak thus — and thus. I live to show
How much men bear and die not!
. . . . . .
'Thou wilt tell
With the grimace of hate how horrible
It was to meet my love when thine grew less;

Thou wilt admire how I could e'er address
Such features to love's work. This taunt, though true,
(For indeed Nature nor in form nor hue
Bestowed on me her choicest workmanship)
Shall not be thy defence; for since thy lip
Met mine first, years long past, — since thine eye kindled
With soft fire under mine, — I have not dwindled,
Nor changed in mind or body, or in aught
But as love changes what it loveth not
After long years and many trials.

'How vain
Are words! I thought never to speak again,
Not even in secret, not to mine own heart;
But from my lips the unwilling accents start,
And from my pen the words flow as I write,
Dazzling my eyes with scalding tears; my sight
Is dim to see that charactered in vain
On this unfeeling leaf, which burns the brain
And eats into it, blotting all things fair
And wise and good which time had written there.

Those who inflict must suffer, for they see
The work of their own hearts, and this must be
Our chastisement or recompense. — O child!
I would that thine were like to be more mild
For both our wretched sakes, — for thine the most
Who feelest already all that thou hast lost
Without the power to wish it thine again;
And as slow years pass, a funereal train,
Each with the ghost of some lost hope or friend
Following it like its shadow, wilt thou bend
No thought on my dead memory?
. . . . . .
'Alas, love!
Fear me not — against thee I would not move
A finger in despite. Do I not live

That thou mayst have less bitter cause to grieve?
I give thee tears for scorn, and love for hate;
And that thy lot may be less desolate
Than his on whom thou tramplest, I refrain
From that sweet sleep which medicines all pain.
Then, when thou speakest of me, never say
"He could forgive not." Here I cast away
All human passions, all revenge, all pride;
I think, speak, act no ill; I do but hide
Under these words, like embers, every spark
Of that which has consumed me. Quick and dark
The grave is yawning — as its roof shall cover
My limbs with dust and worms under and over,
So let Oblivion hide this grief — the air
Closes upon my accents as despair
Upon my heart — let death upon despair!'

He ceased, and overcome leant back awhile;
Then rising, with a melancholy smile,
Went to a sofa, and lay down, and slept
A heavy sleep, and in his dreams he wept,
And muttered some familiar name, and we
Wept without shame in his society.
I think I never was impressed so much;
The man who were not must have lacked a touch
Of human nature. — Then we lingered not,
Although our argument was quite forgot;
But, calling the attendants, went to dine
At Maddalo's; yet neither cheer nor wine
Could give us spirits, for we talked of him
And nothing else, till daylight made stars dim;
And we agreed his was some dreadful ill
Wrought on him boldly, yet unspeakable,
By a dear friend; some deadly change in love
Of one vowed deeply, which he dreamed not of;
For whose sake he, it seemed, had fixed a blot
Of falsehood on his mind which flourished not

But in the light of all-beholding truth;
And having stamped this canker on his youth
She had abandoned him — and how much more
Might be his woe, we guessed not; he had store
Of friends and fortune once, as we could guess
From his nice habits and his gentleness;
These were now lost — it were a grief indeed
If he had changed one unsustaining reed
For all that such a man might else adorn.
The colors of his mind seemed yet unworn;
For the wild language of his grief was high —
Such as in measure were called poetry.
And I remember one remark which then
Maddalo made. He said—'Most wretched men
Are cradled into poetry by wrong;
They learn in suffering what they teach in song.'

If I had been an unconnected man,
I, from this moment, should have formed some plan
Never to leave sweet Venice, — for to me
It was delight to ride by the lone sea;
And then the town is silent — one may write
Or read in gondolas by day or night,
Having the little brazen lamp alight,
Unseen, uninterrupted; books are there,
Pictures, and casts from all those statues fair
Which were twin-born with poetry, and all
We seek in towns, with little to recall
Regrets for the green country. I might sit
In Maddalo's great palace, and his wit
And subtle talk would cheer the winter night
And make me know myself, and the firelight
Would flash upon our faces, till the day
Might dawn and make me wonder at my stay.
But I had friends in London too. The chief
Attraction here was that I sought relief
From the deep tenderness that maniac wrought

Within me—’t was perhaps an idle thought,
But I imagined that if day by day
I watched him, and but seldom went away,
And studied all the beatings of his heart
With zeal, as men study some stubborn art
For their own good, and could by patience find
An entrance to the caverns of his mind,
I might reclaim him from this dark estate.
In friendships I had been most fortunate,
Yet never saw I one whom I would call
More willingly my friend; and this was all
Accomplished not; such dreams of baseless good
Oft come and go in crowds and solitude
And leave no trace, — but what I now designed
Made, for long years, impression on my mind.
The following morning, urged by my affairs,
I left bright Venice.

After many years,
And many changes, I returned; the name
Of Venice, and its aspect, was the same;
But Maddalo was travelling far away
Among the mountains of Armenia.
His dog was dead. His child had now become
A woman; such as it has been my doom
To meet with few, a wonder of this earth,
Where there is little of transcendent worth,
Like one of Shakespeare’s women. Kindly she,
And with a manner beyond courtesy,
Received her father’s friend; and, when I asked
Of the lorn maniac, she her memory tasked,
And told, as she had heard, the mournful tale:
‘That the poor sufferer’s health began to fail
Two years from my departure, but that then
The lady, who had left him, came again.
Her mien had been imperious, but she now
Looked meek — perhaps remorse had brought her low.

Her coming made him better, and they stayed
Together at my father's — for I played
As I remember with the lady's shawl;
I might be six years old — but after all
She left him.' 'Why, her heart must have been tough.
How did it end?' 'And was not this enough?
They met — they parted.' 'Child, is there no more?'
'Something within that interval which bore
The stamp of *why* they parted, *how* they met;
Yet if thine aged eyes disdain to wet
Those wrinkled cheeks with youth's remembered tears,
Ask me no more, but let the silent years
Be closed and cered over their memory,
As yon mute marble where their corpses lie.'
I urged and questioned still; she told me how
All happened — but the cold world shall not know.

PETER BELL THE THIRD

BY MICHING MALLECHO, ESQ.

Is it a party in a parlour,
Crammed just as they on earth were crammed,
Some sipping punch — some sipping tea;
But, as you by their faces see,
All silent, and all — damned!
"Peter Bell", by W.
Wordsworth.

OPHELIA. — What means this, my lord?
HAMLET. — Marry, this is Miching Mallecho; it means mischief.
Shakespeare.

Composed at Florence, October, 1819, and forwarded to Hunt (November 2) to be published by C. & J. Ollier without the author's name; ultimately printed by Mrs. Shelley in the second edition of the "Poetical Works", 1839. A skit by John Hamilton Reynolds, "Peter Bell, a Lyrical Ballad", had already appeared (April, 1819), a few days before the publication of Wordsworth's "Peter Bell, a Tale". These productions were reviewed in Leigh Hunt's "Examiner" (April 26, May 3, 1819); and to the entertainment derived from his perusal of Hunt's criticisms the composition of Shelley's "Peter Bell the Third" is chiefly owing.

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PETER BELL THE THIRD

DEDICATION.

TO THOMAS BROWN, ESQ., THE YOUNGER, H.F.

Dear Tom,

Allow me to request you to introduce Mr. Peter Bell to the respectable family of the Fudges. Although he may fall short of those very considerable personages in the more active properties which characterize the Rat and the Apostate, I suspect that even you, their historian, will confess that he surpasses them in the more peculiarly legitimate qualification of intolerable dulness.

You know Mr. Examiner Hunt; well — it was he who presented me to two of the Mr. Bells. My intimacy with the younger Mr. Bell naturally sprung from this introduction to his brothers. And in presenting him to you, I have the satisfaction of being able to assure you that he is considerably the dullest of the three.

There is this particular advantage in an acquaintance with any one of the Peter Bells, that if you know one Peter Bell, you know three Peter Bells; they are not one, but three; not three, but one. An awful mystery, which, after having caused torrents of blood, and having been hymned by groans enough to deafen the music of the spheres, is at length illustrated to the satisfaction of all parties in the theological world, by the nature of Mr. Peter Bell.

Peter is a polyhedric Peter, or a Peter with many sides. He changes colours like a chameleon, and his coat like a snake. He is a Proteus of a Peter. He was at first sublime, pathetic, impressive, profound; then dull; then prosy and dull; and now dull — oh so very dull! it is an ultra-legitimate dulness.

You will perceive that it is not necessary to consider Hell and the Devil as supernatural machinery. The whole scene of my epic is in ‘this world which is’ — so Peter informed us before his conversion to “White Obi” —

‘The world of all of us, AND WHERE
WE FIND OUR HAPPINESS, OR NOT AT ALL.’

Let me observe that I have spent six or seven days in composing this sublime piece; the orb of my moonlike genius has made the fourth part of its revolution round the dull earth which you inhabit, driving you mad, while it has retained its calmness and its splendour, and I have been fitting this its last phase ‘to occupy a permanent station in the literature of my country.’

Your works, indeed, dear Tom, sell better; but mine are far superior. The public is no judge; posterity sets all to rights.

Allow me to observe that so much has been written of Peter Bell, that the present history can be considered only, like the Iliad, as a continuation of that series of cyclic poems, which have already been candidates for bestowing immortality upon, at the same time that they receive it from, his character and adventures. In this point of view I have violated no rule of syntax in beginning my composition with a conjunction; the full stop which closes the poem continued by me being, like the full stops at the end of the Iliad and Odyssey, a full stop of a very qualified import.

Hoping that the immortality which you have given to the Fudges, you will receive from them; and in the firm expectation, that when London shall be an habitation of bitterns; when St. Paul’s and Westminster Abbey shall stand, shapeless and nameless ruins, in the midst of an unpeopled marsh; when the piers of Waterloo Bridge shall become the nuclei of islets of reeds and osiers, and cast the jagged shadows of their broken arches on the solitary stream, some transatlantic commentator will be weighing in the scales of some new and now unimagined system of criticism, the respective merits of the Bells and the Fudges, and their historians. I remain, dear Tom, yours sincerely,
MICHING MALLECHO.

December 1, 1819.

P.S. — Pray excuse the date of place; so soon as the profits of the publication come in, I mean to hire lodgings in a more respectable street.

PROLOGUE.

Peter Bells, one, two and three,
O'er the wide world wandering be. —
First, the antenatal Peter,
Wrapped in weeds of the same metre,
The so-long-predestined raiment
Clothed in which to walk his way meant
The second Peter; whose ambition
Is to link the proposition,
As the mean of two extremes —
(This was learned from Aldric's themes)
Shielding from the guilt of schism
The orthodoxal syllogism;
The First Peter — he who was
Like the shadow in the glass
Of the second, yet unripe,
His substantial antitype. —

Then came Peter Bell the Second,
Who henceforward must be reckoned
The body of a double soul,
And that portion of the whole
Without which the rest would seem
Ends of a disjointed dream. —
And the Third is he who has
O'er the grave been forced to pass
To the other side, which is, —
Go and try else, — just like this.

Peter Bell the First was Peter
Smugger, milder, softer, neater,
Like the soul before it is
Born from THAT world into THIS.
The next Peter Bell was he,
Predevote, like you and me,

To good or evil as may come;
His was the severer doom, —
For he was an evil Cotter,
And a polygamic Potter.
And the last is Peter Bell,
Damned since our first parents fell,
Damned eternally to Hell —
Surely he deserves it well!

PART 1. DEATH.

1.
And Peter Bell, when he had been
With fresh-imported Hell-fire warmed,
Grew serious — from his dress and mien
‘Twas very plainly to be seen
Peter was quite reformed.

2.
His eyes turned up, his mouth turned down;
His accent caught a nasal twang;
He oiled his hair; there might be heard
The grace of God in every word
Which Peter said or sang.

3.
But Peter now grew old, and had
An ill no doctor could unravel:
His torments almost drove him mad; —
Some said it was a fever bad —
Some swore it was the gravel.

4.
His holy friends then came about,
And with long preaching and persuasion
Convinced the patient that, without
The smallest shadow of a doubt,
He was predestined to damnation.

5.
They said—’Thy name is Peter Bell;
Thy skin is of a brimstone hue;
Alive or dead — ay, sick or well —
The one God made to rhyme with hell;
The other, I think, rhymes with you.

6.
Then Peter set up such a yell! —
The nurse, who with some water gruel
Was climbing up the stairs, as well
As her old legs could climb them — fell,
And broke them both — the fall was cruel.

7.
The Parson from the casement lept
Into the lake of Windermere —
And many an eel — though no adept
In God's right reason for it — kept
Gnawing his kidneys half a year.

8.
And all the rest rushed through the door
And tumbled over one another,
And broke their skulls. — Upon the floor
Meanwhile sat Peter Bell, and swore,
And cursed his father and his mother;

9.
And raved of God, and sin, and death,
Blaspheming like an infidel;
And said, that with his clenched teeth
He'd seize the earth from underneath,
And drag it with him down to hell.

10.
As he was speaking came a spasm,
And wrenched his gnashing teeth asunder;
Like one who sees a strange phantasm
He lay, — there was a silent chasm
Between his upper jaw and under.

11.
And yellow death lay on his face;
And a fixed smile that was not human

Told, as I understand the case,
That he was gone to the wrong place: —
I heard all this from the old woman.

12.
Then there came down from Langdale Pike
A cloud, with lightning, wind and hail;
It swept over the mountains like
An ocean, — and I heard it strike
The woods and crags of Grasmere vale.

13.
And I saw the black storm come
Nearer, minute after minute;
Its thunder made the cataracts dumb;
With hiss, and clash, and hollow hum,
It neared as if the Devil was in it.

14.
The Devil WAS in it: — he had bought
Peter for half-a-crown; and when
The storm which bore him vanished, nought
That in the house that storm had caught
Was ever seen again.

15.
The gaping neighbours came next day —
They found all vanished from the shore:
The Bible, whence he used to pray,
Half scorched under a hen-coop lay;
Smashed glass — and nothing more!

PART 2. THE DEVIL.

1.
The Devil, I safely can aver,
Has neither hoof, nor tail, nor sting;
Nor is he, as some sages swear,
A spirit, neither here nor there,
In nothing — yet in everything.

2.
He is — what we are; for sometimes
The Devil is a gentleman;
At others a bard bartering rhymes
For sack; a statesman spinning crimes;
A swindler, living as he can;

3.
A thief, who cometh in the night,
With whole boots and net pantaloons,
Like some one whom it were not right
To mention; — or the luckless wight
From whom he steals nine silver spoons.

4.
But in this case he did appear
Like a slop-merchant from Wapping,
And with smug face, and eye severe,
On every side did perk and peer
Till he saw Peter dead or napping.

5.
He had on an upper Benjamin
(For he was of the driving schism)
In the which he wrapped his skin
From the storm he travelled in,
For fear of rheumatism.

6.
He called the ghost out of the corse; —
It was exceedingly like Peter, —
Only its voice was hollow and hoarse —
It had a queerish look of course —
Its dress too was a little neater.

7.
The Devil knew not his name and lot;
Peter knew not that he was Bell:
Each had an upper stream of thought,
Which made all seem as it was not;
Fitting itself to all things well.

8.
Peter thought he had parents dear,
Brothers, sisters, cousins, cronies,
In the fens of Lincolnshire;
He perhaps had found them there
Had he gone and boldly shown his

9.
Solemn phiz in his own village;
Where he thought oft when a boy
He'd clomb the orchard walls to pillage
The produce of his neighbour's tillage,
With marvellous pride and joy.

10.
And the Devil thought he had,
'Mid the misery and confusion
Of an unjust war, just made
A fortune by the gainful trade
Of giving soldiers rations bad —
The world is full of strange delusion —

11.
That he had a mansion planned

In a square like Grosvenor Square,
That he was aping fashion, and
That he now came to Westmoreland
To see what was romantic there.

12.
And all this, though quite ideal, —
Ready at a breath to vanish, —
Was a state not more unreal
Than the peace he could not feel,
Or the care he could not banish.

13.
After a little conversation,
The Devil told Peter, if he chose,
He'd bring him to the world of fashion
By giving him a situation
In his own service — and new clothes.

14.
And Peter bowed, quite pleased and proud,
And after waiting some few days
For a new livery — dirty yellow
Turned up with black — the wretched fellow
Was bowled to Hell in the Devil's chaise.

PART 3. HELL.

1.
Hell is a city much like London —
A populous and a smoky city;
There are all sorts of people undone,
And there is little or no fun done;
Small justice shown, and still less pity.

2.
There is a Castles, and a Canning,
A Cobbett, and a Castlereagh;
All sorts of caitiff corpses planning
All sorts of cozening for trepanning
Corpses less corrupt than they.

3.
There is a ***, who has lost
His wits, or sold them, none knows which;
He walks about a double ghost,
And though as thin as Fraud almost —
Ever grows more grim and rich.

4.
There is a Chancery Court; a King;
A manufacturing mob; a set
Of thieves who by themselves are sent
Similar thieves to represent;
An army; and a public debt.

5.
Which last is a scheme of paper money,
And means — being interpreted —
‘Bees, keep your wax — give us the honey,
And we will plant, while skies are sunny,
Flowers, which in winter serve instead.’

6.
There is a great talk of revolution —
And a great chance of despotism —
German soldiers — camps — confusion —
Tumults — lotteries — rage — delusion —
Gin — suicide — and methodism;

7.
Taxes too, on wine and bread,
And meat, and beer, and tea, and cheese,
From which those patriots pure are fed,
Who gorge before they reel to bed
The tenfold essence of all these.

8.
There are mincing women, mewing,
(Like cats, who amant misere,)
Of their own virtue, and pursuing
Their gentler sisters to that ruin,
Without which — what were chastity?(2)

9.
Lawyers — judges — old hobnobbers
Are there — bailiffs — chancellors —
Bishops — great and little robbers —
Rhymesters — pamphleteers — stock-jobbers —
Men of glory in the wars, —

10.
Things whose trade is, over ladies
To lean, and flirt, and stare, and simper,
Till all that is divine in woman
Grows cruel, courteous, smooth, inhuman,
Crucified ‘twixt a smile and whimper.

11.
Thrusting, toiling, wailing, moiling,
Frowning, preaching — such a riot!

Each with never-ceasing labour,
Whilst he thinks he cheats his neighbour,
Cheating his own heart of quiet.

12.
And all these meet at levees; —
Dinners convivial and political; —
Suppers of epic poets; — teas,
Where small talk dies in agonies; —
Breakfasts professional and critical;

13.
Lunches and snacks so aldermanic
That one would furnish forth ten dinners,
Where reigns a Cretan-tongued panic,
Lest news Russ, Dutch, or Alemannic
Should make some losers, and some winners —

45.
At conversazioni — balls —
Conventicles — and drawing-rooms —
Courts of law — committees — calls
Of a morning — clubs — book-stalls —
Churches — masquerades — and tombs.

15.
And this is Hell — and in this smother
All are damnable and damned;
Each one damning, damns the other;
They are damned by one another,
By none other are they damned.

16.
‘Tis a lie to say, ‘God damns’! (1)
Where was Heaven’s Attorney General
When they first gave out such flams?
Let there be an end of shams,
They are mines of poisonous mineral.

17.
Statesmen damn themselves to be
Cursed; and lawyers damn their souls
To the auction of a fee;
Churchmen damn themselves to see
God's sweet love in burning coals.

18.
The rich are damned, beyond all cure,
To taunt, and starve, and trample on
The weak and wretched; and the poor
Damn their broken hearts to endure
Stripe on stripe, with groan on groan.

19.
Sometimes the poor are damned indeed
To take, — not means for being blessed, —
But Cobbett's snuff, revenge; that weed
From which the worms that it doth feed
Squeeze less than they before possessed.

20.
And some few, like we know who,
Damned — but God alone knows why —
To believe their minds are given
To make this ugly Hell a Heaven;
In which faith they live and die.

21.
Thus, as in a town, plague-stricken,
Each man be he sound or no
Must indifferently sicken;
As when day begins to thicken,
None knows a pigeon from a crow, —

22.
So good and bad, sane and mad,
The oppressor and the oppressed;

Those who weep to see what others
Smile to inflict upon their brothers;
Lovers, haters, worst and best;

23.
All are damned — they breathe an air,
Thick, infected, joy-dispelling:
Each pursues what seems most fair,
Mining like moles, through mind, and there
Scoop palace-caverns vast, where Care
In throned state is ever dwelling.

PART 4. SIN.

1.
Lo. Peter in Hell's Grosvenor Square,
A footman in the Devil's service!
And the misjudging world would swear
That every man in service there
To virtue would prefer vice.

2.
But Peter, though now damned, was not
What Peter was before damnation.
Men oftentimes prepare a lot
Which ere it finds them, is not what
Suits with their genuine station.

3.
All things that Peter saw and felt
Had a peculiar aspect to him;
And when they came within the belt
Of his own nature, seemed to melt,
Like cloud to cloud, into him.

4.
And so the outward world uniting
To that within him, he became
Considerably uninviting
To those who, meditation slighting,
Were moulded in a different frame.

5.
And he scorned them, and they scorned him;
And he scorned all they did; and they
Did all that men of their own trim
Are wont to do to please their whim,
Drinking, lying, swearing, play.

6.
Such were his fellow-servants; thus
His virtue, like our own, was built
Too much on that indignant fuss
Hypocrite Pride stirs up in us
To bully one another's guilt.

7.
He had a mind which was somehow
At once circumference and centre
Of all he might or feel or know;
Nothing went ever out, although
Something did ever enter.

8.
He had as much imagination
As a pint-pot; — he never could
Fancy another situation,
From which to dart his contemplation,
Than that wherein he stood.

9.
Yet his was individual mind,
And new created all he saw
In a new manner, and refined
Those new creations, and combined
Them, by a master-spirit's law.

10.
Thus — though unimaginative —
An apprehension clear, intense,
Of his mind's work, had made alive
The things it wrought on; I believe
Wakening a sort of thought in sense.

11.
But from the first 'twas Peter's drift
To be a kind of moral eunuch,

He touched the hem of Nature's shift,
Felt faint — and never dared uplift
The closest, all-concealing tunic.

12.
She laughed the while, with an arch smile,
And kissed him with a sister's kiss,
And said — My best Diogenes,
I love you well — but, if you please,
Tempt not again my deepest bliss.

13.
''Tis you are cold — for I, not coy,
Yield love for love, frank, warm, and true;
And Burns, a Scottish peasant boy —
His errors prove it — knew my joy
More, learned friend, than you.

14.
'Boeca bacciata non perde ventura,
Anzi rinnuova come fa la luna: —
So thought Boccaccio, whose sweet words might cure a
Male prude, like you, from what you now endure, a
Low-tide in soul, like a stagnant laguna.

15.
Then Peter rubbed his eyes severe.
And smoothed his spacious forehead down
With his broad palm;—'twixt love and fear,
He looked, as he no doubt felt, queer,
And in his dream sate down.

16.
The Devil was no uncommon creature;
A leaden-witted thief — just huddled
Out of the dross and scum of nature;
A toad-like lump of limb and feature,
With mind, and heart, and fancy muddled.

17.
He was that heavy, dull, cold thing,
The spirit of evil well may be:
A drone too base to have a sting;
Who gluts, and grimes his lazy wing,
And calls lust, luxury.

18.
Now he was quite the kind of wight
Round whom collect, at a fixed aera,
Venison, turtle, hock, and claret, —
Good cheer — and those who come to share it —
And best East Indian madeira!

19.
It was his fancy to invite
Men of science, wit, and learning,
Who came to lend each other light;
He proudly thought that his gold's might
Had set those spirits burning.

20.
And men of learning, science, wit,
Considered him as you and I
Think of some rotten tree, and sit
Lounging and dining under it,
Exposed to the wide sky.

21.
And all the while with loose fat smile,
The willing wretch sat winking there,
Believing 'twas his power that made
That jovial scene — and that all paid
Homage to his unnoticed chair.

22.
Though to be sure this place was Hell;
He was the Devil — and all they —

What though the claret circled well,
And wit, like ocean, rose and fell? —
Were damned eternally.

PART 5. GRACE.

1.
Among the guests who often stayed
Till the Devil's petits-soupers,
A man there came, fair as a maid,
And Peter noted what he said,
Standing behind his master's chair.

2.
He was a mighty poet — and
A subtle-souled psychologist;
All things he seemed to understand,
Of old or new — of sea or land —
But his own mind — which was a mist.

3.
This was a man who might have turned
Hell into Heaven — and so in gladness
A Heaven unto himself have earned;
But he in shadows undiscerned
Trusted. — and damned himself to madness.

4.
He spoke of poetry, and how
'Divine it was — a light — a love —
A spirit which like wind doth blow
As it listeth, to and fro;
A dew rained down from God above;

5.
'A power which comes and goes like dream,
And which none can ever trace —
Heaven's light on earth — Truth's brightest beam.'
And when he ceased there lay the gleam
Of those words upon his face.

6.
Now Peter, when he heard such talk,
Would, heedless of a broken pate,
Stand like a man asleep, or balk
Some wishing guest of knife or fork,
Or drop and break his master's plate.

7.
At night he oft would start and wake
Like a lover, and began
In a wild measure songs to make
On moor, and glen, and rocky lake,
And on the heart of man —

8.
And on the universal sky —
And the wide earth's bosom green, —
And the sweet, strange mystery
Of what beyond these things may lie,
And yet remain unseen.

9.
For in his thought he visited
The spots in which, ere dead and damned,
He his wayward life had led;
Yet knew not whence the thoughts were fed
Which thus his fancy crammed.

10.
And these obscure remembrances
Stirred such harmony in Peter,
That, whensoever he should please,
He could speak of rocks and trees
In poetic metre.

11.
For though it was without a sense
Of memory, yet he remembered well

Many a ditch and quick-set fence;
Of lakes he had intelligence,
He knew something of heath and fell.

12.
He had also dim recollections
Of pedlars tramping on their rounds;
Milk-pans and pails; and odd collections
Of saws, and proverbs; and reflections
Old parsons make in burying-grounds.

13.
But Peter's verse was clear, and came
Announcing from the frozen hearth
Of a cold age, that none might tame
The soul of that diviner flame
It augured to the Earth:

14.
Like gentle rains, on the dry plains,
Making that green which late was gray,
Or like the sudden moon, that stains
Some gloomy chamber's window-panes
With a broad light like day.

15.
For language was in Peter's hand
Like clay while he was yet a potter;
And he made songs for all the land,
Sweet both to feel and understand,
As pipkins late to mountain Cotter.

16.
And Mr. — , the bookseller,
Gave twenty pounds for some; — then scorning
A footman's yellow coat to wear,
Peter, too proud of heart, I fear,
Instantly gave the Devil warning.

17.
Whereat the Devil took offence,
And swore in his soul a great oath then,
‘That for his damned impertinence
He’d bring him to a proper sense
Of what was due to gentlemen!’

PART 6. DAMNATION.

1.
‘O that mine enemy had written
A book!’ — cried Job: — a fearful curse,
If to the Arab, as the Briton,
‘Twas galling to be critic-bitten: —
The Devil to Peter wished no worse.

2.
When Peter’s next new book found vent,
The Devil to all the first Reviews
A copy of it slyly sent,
With five-pound note as compliment,
And this short notice—’Pray abuse.’

3.
Then seriatim, month and quarter,
Appeared such mad tirades. — One said —
‘Peter seduced Mrs. Foy’s daughter,
Then drowned the mother in Ullswater,
The last thing as he went to bed.’

4.
Another—’Let him shave his head!
Where’s Dr. Willis? — Or is he joking?
What does the rascal mean or hope,
No longer imitating Pope,
In that barbarian Shakespeare poking?’

5.
One more, ‘Is incest not enough?
And must there be adultery too?
Grace after meat? Miscreant and Liar!
Thief! Blackguard! Scoundrel! Fool! hell-fire
Is twenty times too good for you.

6.
‘By that last book of yours WE think
You’ve double damned yourself to scorn;
We warned you whilst yet on the brink
You stood. From your black name will shrink
The babe that is unborn.’

7.
All these Reviews the Devil made
Up in a parcel, which he had
Safely to Peter’s house conveyed.
For carriage, tenpence Peter paid —
Untied them — read them — went half mad.

8.
‘What!’ cried he, ‘this is my reward
For nights of thought, and days, of toil?
Do poets, but to be abhorred
By men of whom they never heard,
Consume their spirits’ oil?

9.
‘What have I done to them? — and who
IS Mrs. Foy? ‘Tis very cruel
To speak of me and Betty so!
Adultery! God defend me! Oh!
I’ve half a mind to fight a duel.

10.
‘Or,’ cried he, a grave look collecting,
‘Is it my genius, like the moon,
Sets those who stand her face inspecting,
That face within their brain reflecting,
Like a crazed bell-chime, out of tune?’

11.
For Peter did not know the town,
But thought, as country readers do,

For half a guinea or a crown,
He bought oblivion or renown
From God's own voice (1) in a review.

12.
All Peter did on this occasion
Was, writing some sad stuff in prose.
It is a dangerous invasion
When poets criticize; their station
Is to delight, not pose.

13.
The Devil then sent to Leipsic fair
For Born's translation of Kant's book;
A world of words, tail foremost, where
Right — wrong — false — true — and foul — and fair
As in a lottery-wheel are shook.

14.
Five thousand crammed octavo pages
Of German psychologics, — he
Who his furor verborum assuages
Thereon, deserves just seven months' wages
More than will e'er be due to me.

15.
I looked on them nine several days,
And then I saw that they were bad;
A friend, too, spoke in their dispraise, —
He never read them; — with amaze
I found Sir William Drummond had.

16.
When the book came, the Devil sent
It to P. Verbovale (2), Esquire,
With a brief note of compliment,
By that night's Carlisle mail. It went,
And set his soul on fire.

17.
Fire, which ex luce praebens fumum,
Made him beyond the bottom see
Of truth's clear well — when I and you, Ma'am,
Go, as we shall do, subter humum,
We may know more than he.

18.
Now Peter ran to seed in soul
Into a walking paradox;
For he was neither part nor whole,
Nor good, nor bad — nor knave nor fool;
— Among the woods and rocks

19.
Furious he rode, where late he ran,
Lashing and spurring his tame hobby;
Turned to a formal puritan,
A solemn and unsexual man, —
He half believed "White Obi".

20.
This steed in vision he would ride,
High trotting over nine-inch bridges,
With Flibbertigibbet, imp of pride,
Mocking and mowing by his side —
A mad-brained goblin for a guide —
Over corn-fields, gates, and hedges.

21.
After these ghastly rides, he came
Home to his heart, and found from thence
Much stolen of its accustomed flame;
His thoughts grew weak, drowsy, and lame
Of their intelligence.

22.
To Peter's view, all seemed one hue;

He was no Whig, he was no Tory;
No Deist and no Christian he; —
He got so subtle, that to be
Nothing, was all his glory.

23.
One single point in his belief
From his organization sprung,
The heart-enrooted faith, the chief
Ear in his doctrines' blighted sheaf,
That 'Happiness is wrong';

24.
So thought Calvin and Dominic;
So think their fierce successors, who
Even now would neither stint nor stick
Our flesh from off our bones to pick,
If they might 'do their do.'

25.
His morals thus were undermined: —
The old Peter — the hard, old Potter —
Was born anew within his mind;
He grew dull, harsh, sly, unrefined,
As when he tramped beside the Otter. (1)

26.
In the death hues of agony
Lambently flashing from a fish,
Now Peter felt amused to see
Shades like a rainbow's rise and flee,
Mixed with a certain hungry wish(2).

27.
So in his Country's dying face
He looked — and, lovely as she lay,
Seeking in vain his last embrace,

Wailing her own abandoned case,
With hardened sneer he turned away:

28.
And coolly to his own soul said; —
‘Do you not think that we might make
A poem on her when she’s dead: —
Or, no — a thought is in my head —
Her shroud for a new sheet I’ll take:

29.
‘My wife wants one. — Let who will bury
This mangled corpse! And I and you,
My dearest Soul, will then make merry,
As the Prince Regent did with Sherry,—’
‘Ay — and at last desert me too.’

30.
And so his Soul would not be gay,
But moaned within him; like a fawn
Moaning within a cave, it lay
Wounded and wasting, day by day,
Till all its life of life was gone.

31.
As troubled skies stain waters clear,
The storm in Peter’s heart and mind
Now made his verses dark and queer:
They were the ghosts of what they were,
Shaking dim grave-clothes in the wind.

32.
For he now raved enormous folly,
Of Baptisms, Sunday-schools, and Graves,
‘Twould make George Colman melancholy
To have heard him, like a male Molly,
Chanting those stupid staves.

33.
Yet the Reviews, who heaped abuse
On Peter while he wrote for freedom,
So soon as in his song they spy
The folly which soothes tyranny,
Praise him, for those who feed ‘em.

34.
‘He was a man, too great to scan; —
A planet lost in truth’s keen rays: —
His virtue, awful and prodigious; —
He was the most sublime, religious,
Pure-minded Poet of these days.’

35.
As soon as he read that, cried Peter,
‘Eureka! I have found the way
To make a better thing of metre
Than e’er was made by living creature
Up to this blessed day.’

36.
Then Peter wrote odes to the Devil; —
In one of which he meekly said:
‘May Carnage and Slaughter,
Thy niece and thy daughter,
May Rapine and Famine,
Thy gorge ever cramming,
Glut thee with living and dead!

37.
‘May Death and Damnation,
And Consternation,
Flit up from Hell with pure intent!
Slash them at Manchester,
Glasgow, Leeds, and Chester;
Drench all with blood from Avon to Trent.

38.
‘Let thy body-guard yeomen
Hew down babes and women,
And laugh with bold triumph till Heaven be rent!
When Moloch in Jewry
Munched children with fury,
It was thou, Devil, dining with pure intent. (1)

PART 7. DOUBLE DAMNATION.

1.
The Devil now knew his proper cue. —
Soon as he read the ode, he drove
To his friend Lord MacMurderchouse's,
A man of interest in both houses,
And said:—'For money or for love,

2.
'Pray find some cure or sinecure;
To feed from the superfluous taxes
A friend of ours — a poet — fewer
Have fluttered tamer to the lure
Than he.' His lordship stands and racks his

3.
Stupid brains, while one might count
As many beads as he had boroughs, —
At length replies; from his mean front,
Like one who rubs out an account,
Smoothing away the unmeaning furrows:

4.
'It happens fortunately, dear Sir,
I can. I hope I need require
No pledge from you, that he will stir
In our affairs; — like Oliver.
That he'll be worthy of his hire.'

5.
These words exchanged, the news sent off
To Peter, home the Devil hied, —
Took to his bed; he had no cough,
No doctor, — meat and drink enough. —
Yet that same night he died.

6.
The Devil's corpse was leaded down;
His decent heirs enjoyed his pelf,
Mourning-coaches, many a one,
Followed his hearse along the town: —
Where was the Devil himself?

7.
When Peter heard of his promotion,
His eyes grew like two stars for bliss:
There was a bow of sleek devotion
Engendering in his back; each motion
Seemed a Lord's shoe to kiss.

8.
He hired a house, bought plate, and made
A genteel drive up to his door,
With sifted gravel neatly laid, —
As if defying all who said,
Peter was ever poor.

9.
But a disease soon struck into
The very life and soul of Peter —
He walked about — slept — had the hue
Of health upon his cheeks — and few
Dug better — none a heartier eater.

10.
And yet a strange and horrid curse
Clung upon Peter, night and day;
Month after month the thing grew worse,
And deadlier than in this my verse
I can find strength to say.

11.
Peter was dull — he was at first
Dull — oh, so dull — so very dull!

Whether he talked, wrote, or rehearsed —
Still with this dulness was he cursed —
Dull — beyond all conception — dull.

12.
No one could read his books — no mortal,
But a few natural friends, would hear him;
The parson came not near his portal;
His state was like that of the immortal
Described by Swift — no man could bear him.

13.
His sister, wife, and children yawned,
With a long, slow, and drear ennui,
All human patience far beyond;
Their hopes of Heaven each would have pawned,
Anywhere else to be.

14.
But in his verse, and in his prose,
The essence of his dulness was
Concentred and compressed so close,
‘Twould have made Guatimozin doze
On his red gridiron of brass.

15.
A printer’s boy, folding those pages,
Fell slumbrously upon one side;
Like those famed Seven who slept three ages.
To wakeful frenzy’s vigil — rages,
As opiates, were the same applied.

16.
Even the Reviewers who were hired
To do the work of his reviewing,
With adamantine nerves, grew tired; —
Gaping and torpid they retired,
To dream of what they should be doing.

17.
And worse and worse, the drowsy curse
Yawned in him, till it grew a pest —
A wide contagious atmosphere,
Creeping like cold through all things near;
A power to infect and to infest.

18.
His servant-maids and dogs grew dull;
His kitten, late a sportive elf;
The woods and lakes, so beautiful,
Of dim stupidity were full.
All grew dull as Peter's self.

19.
The earth under his feet — the springs,
Which lived within it a quick life,
The air, the winds of many wings,
That fan it with new murmurings,
Were dead to their harmonious strife.

20.
The birds and beasts within the wood,
The insects, and each creeping thing,
Were now a silent multitude;
Love's work was left unwrought — no brood
Near Peter's house took wing.

21.
And every neighbouring cottager
Stupidly yawned upon the other:
No jackass brayed; no little cur
Cocked up his ears; — no man would stir
To save a dying mother.

22.
Yet all from that charmed district went
But some half-idiot and half-knave,

Who rather than pay any rent,
Would live with marvellous content,
Over his father's grave.

23.
No bailiff dared within that space,
For fear of the dull charm, to enter;
A man would bear upon his face,
For fifteen months in any case,
The yawn of such a venture.

24.
Seven miles above — below — around —
This pest of dulness holds its sway;
A ghastly life without a sound;
To Peter's soul the spell is bound —
How should it ever pass away?

THE MASK OF ANARCHY

WRITTEN ON THE OCCASION OF THE MASSACRE AT MANCHESTER.

Composed at the Villa Valsovano near Leghorn — or possibly later, during Shelley's sojourn at Florence — in the autumn of 1819, shortly after the Peterloo riot at Manchester, August 16; edited with Preface by Leigh Hunt, and published under the poet's name by Edward Moxon, 1832 (Bradbury & Evans, printers). Two manuscripts are extant: a transcript by Mrs. Shelley with Shelley's autograph corrections, known as the 'Hunt manuscript'; and an earlier draft, not quite complete, in the poet's handwriting, presented by Mrs. Shelley to (Sir) John Bowring in 1826, and now in the possession of Mr. Thomas J. Wise (the 'Wise manuscript'). Mrs. Shelley's copy was sent to Leigh Hunt in 1819 with view to its publication in "The Examiner"; hence the name 'Hunt manuscript.' A facsimile of the Wise manuscript was published by the Shelley Society in 1887. Sources of the text are (1) the Hunt manuscript; (2) the Wise manuscript; (3) the editio princeps, editor Leigh Hunt, 1832; (4) Mrs. Shelley's two editions ("Poetical Works") of 1839. Of the two manuscripts Mrs. Shelley's transcript is the later and more authoritative.

THE MASK OF ANARCHY

1.
As I lay asleep in Italy
There came a voice from over the Sea,
And with great power it forth led me
To walk in the visions of Poesy.

2.
I met Murder on the way —
He had a mask like Castlereagh —
Very smooth he looked, yet grim;
Seven blood-hounds followed him:

3.
All were fat; and well they might
Be in admirable plight,
For one by one, and two by two,
He tossed them human hearts to chew
Which from his wide cloak he drew.

4.
Next came Fraud, and he had on,
Like Eldon, an ermined gown;
His big tears, for he wept well,
Turned to mill-stones as they fell.

5.
And the little children, who
Round his feet played to and fro,
Thinking every tear a gem,
Had their brains knocked out by them.

6.
Clothed with the Bible, as with light,
And the shadows of the night,

Like Sidmouth, next, Hypocrisy
On a crocodile rode by.

7.
And many more Destructions played
In this ghastly masquerade,
All disguised, even to the eyes,
Like Bishops, lawyers, peers, or spies.

8.
Last came Anarchy: he rode
On a white horse, splashed with blood;
He was pale even to the lips,
Like Death in the Apocalypse.

9.
And he wore a kingly crown;
And in his grasp a sceptre shone;
On his brow this mark I saw —
'I AM GOD, AND KING, AND LAW!'

10.
With a pace stately and fast,
Over English land he passed,
Trampling to a mire of blood
The adoring multitude.

11.
And a mighty troop around,
With their trampling shook the ground,
Waving each a bloody sword,
For the service of their Lord.

12.
And with glorious triumph, they
Rode through England proud and gay,
Drunk as with intoxication
Of the wine of desolation.

13.
O’er fields and towns, from sea to sea,
Passed the Pageant swift and free,
Tearing up, and trampling down;
Till they came to London town.

14.
And each dweller, panic-stricken,
Felt his heart with terror sicken
Hearing the tempestuous cry
Of the triumph of Anarchy.

15.
For with pomp to meet him came,
Clothed in arms like blood and flame,
The hired murderers, who did sing
‘Thou art God, and Law, and King.

16.
‘We have waited, weak and lone
For thy coming, Mighty One!
Our purses are empty, our swords are cold,
Give us glory, and blood, and gold.’

17.
Lawyers and priests, a motley crowd,
To the earth their pale brows bowed;
Like a bad prayer not over loud,
Whispering—’Thou art Law and God.’ —

18.
Then all cried with one accord,
‘Thou art King, and God, and Lord;
Anarchy, to thee we bow,
Be thy name made holy now!’

19.
And Anarchy, the Skeleton,

Bowed and grinned to every one,
As well as if his education
Had cost ten millions to the nation.

20.
For he knew the Palaces
Of our Kings were rightly his;
His the sceptre, crown, and globe,
And the gold-inwoven robe.

21.
So he sent his slaves before
To seize upon the Bank and Tower,
And was proceeding with intent
To meet his pensioned Parliament

22.
When one fled past, a maniac maid,
And her name was Hope, she said:
But she looked more like Despair,
And she cried out in the air:

23.
'My father Time is weak and gray
With waiting for a better day;
See how idiot-like he stands,
Fumbling with his palsied hands!

24.
'He has had child after child,
And the dust of death is piled
Over every one but me —
Misery, oh, Misery!'

25.
Then she lay down in the street,
Right before the horses' feet,

Expecting, with a patient eye,
Murder, Fraud, and Anarchy.

26.
When between her and her foes
A mist, a light, an image rose,
Small at first, and weak, and frail
Like the vapour of a vale:

27.
Till as clouds grow on the blast,
Like tower-crowned giants striding fast,
And glare with lightnings as they fly,
And speak in thunder to the sky,

28.
It grew — a Shape arrayed in mail
Brighter than the viper's scale,
And upborne on wings whose grain
Was as the light of sunny rain.

29.
On its helm, seen far away,
A planet, like the Morning's, lay;
And those plumes its light rained through
Like a shower of crimson dew.

30.
With step as soft as wind it passed
O'er the heads of men — so fast
That they knew the presence there,
And looked, — but all was empty air.

31.
As flowers beneath May's footstep waken,
As stars from Night's loose hair are shaken,
As waves arise when loud winds call,
Thoughts sprung where'er that step did fall.

32.
And the prostrate multitude
Looked — and ankle-deep in blood,
Hope, that maiden most serene,
Was walking with a quiet mien:

33.
And Anarchy, the ghastly birth,
Lay dead earth upon the earth;
The Horse of Death tameless as wind
Fled, and with his hoofs did grind
To dust the murderers thronged behind.

34.
A rushing light of clouds and splendour,
A sense awakening and yet tender
Was heard and felt — and at its close
These words of joy and fear arose

35.
As if their own indignant Earth
Which gave the sons of England birth
Had felt their blood upon her brow,
And shuddering with a mother's throe

36.
Had turned every drop of blood
By which her face had been bedewed
To an accent unwithstood, —
As if her heart had cried aloud:

37.
'Men of England, heirs of Glory,
Heroes of unwritten story,
Nurslings of one mighty Mother,
Hopes of her, and one another;

38.
‘Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number,
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you —
Ye are many — they are few.

39.
‘What is Freedom? — ye can tell
That which slavery is, too well —
For its very name has grown
To an echo of your own.

40.
‘‘Tis to work and have such pay
As just keeps life from day to day
In your limbs, as in a cell
For the tyrants’ use to dwell,

41.
‘So that ye for them are made
Loom, and plough, and sword, and spade,
With or without your own will bent
To their defence and nourishment.

42.
‘‘Tis to see your children weak
With their mothers pine and peak,
When the winter winds are bleak, —
They are dying whilst I speak.

43.
‘‘Tis to hunger for such diet
As the rich man in his riot
Casts to the fat dogs that lie
Surfeiting beneath his eye;

44.
‘‘Tis to let the Ghost of Gold
Take from Toil a thousandfold
More than e’er its substance could
In the tyrannies of old.

45.
‘Paper coin — that forgery
Of the title-deeds, which ye
Hold to something of the worth
Of the inheritance of Earth.

46.
‘‘Tis to be a slave in soul
And to hold no strong control
Over your own wills, but be
All that others make of ye.

47.
‘And at length when ye complain
With a murmur weak and vain
‘Tis to see the Tyrant’s crew
Ride over your wives and you
Blood is on the grass like dew.

48.
‘Then it is to feel revenge
Fiercely thirsting to exchange
Blood for blood — and wrong for wrong —
Do not thus when ye are strong.

49.
‘Birds find rest, in narrow nest
When weary of their winged quest;
Beasts find fare, in woody lair
When storm and snow are in the air.

50.
‘Asses, swine, have litter spread
And with fitting food are fed;
All things have a home but one —
Thou, Oh, Englishman, hast none!

51.
‘This is Slavery — savage men,
Or wild beasts within a den
Would endure not as ye do —
But such ills they never knew.

52.
‘What art thou Freedom? O! could slaves
Answer from their living graves
This demand — tyrants would flee
Like a dream’s dim imagery:

53.
‘Thou art not, as impostors say,
A shadow soon to pass away,
A superstition, and a name
Echoing from the cave of Fame.

54.
‘For the labourer thou art bread,
And a comely table spread
From his daily labour come
In a neat and happy home.

55.
Thou art clothes, and fire, and food
For the trampled multitude —
No — in countries that are free
Such starvation cannot be
As in England now we see.

56.
‘To the rich thou art a check,
When his foot is on the neck
Of his victim, thou dost make
That he treads upon a snake.

57.
Thou art Justice — ne’er for gold
May thy righteous laws be sold
As laws are in England — thou
Shield’st alike the high and low.

58.
‘Thou art Wisdom — Freemen never
Dream that God will damn for ever
All who think those things untrue
Of which Priests make such ado.

59.
‘Thou art Peace — never by thee
Would blood and treasure wasted be
As tyrants wasted them, when all
Leagued to quench thy flame in Gaul.

60.
‘What if English toil and blood
Was poured forth, even as a flood?
It availed, Oh, Liberty,
To dim, but not extinguish thee.

61.
‘Thou art Love — the rich have kissed
Thy feet, and like him following Christ,
Give their substance to the free
And through the rough world follow thee,

62.
‘Or turn their wealth to arms, and make

War for thy beloved sake
On wealth, and war, and fraud — whence they
Drew the power which is their prey.

63.
‘Science, Poetry, and Thought
Are thy lamps; they make the lot
Of the dwellers in a cot
So serene, they curse it not.

64.
‘Spirit, Patience, Gentleness,
All that can adorn and bless
Art thou — let deeds, not words, express
Thine exceeding loveliness.

65.
‘Let a great Assembly be
Of the fearless and the free
On some spot of English ground
Where the plains stretch wide around.

66.
‘Let the blue sky overhead,
The green earth on which ye tread,
All that must eternal be
Witness the solemnity.

67.
‘From the corners uttermost
Of the bounds of English coast;
From every hut, village, and town
Where those who live and suffer moan
For others’ misery or their own,

68.
‘From the workhouse and the prison
Where pale as corpses newly risen,

Women, children, young and old
Groan for pain, and weep for cold —

69.
‘From the haunts of daily life
Where is waged the daily strife
With common wants and common cares
Which sows the human heart with tares —

70.
‘Lastly from the palaces
Where the murmur of distress
Echoes, like the distant sound
Of a wind alive around

71.
‘Those prison halls of wealth and fashion,
Where some few feel such compassion
For those who groan, and toil, and wail
As must make their brethren pale —

72.
‘Ye who suffer woes untold,
Or to feel, or to behold
Your lost country bought and sold
With a price of blood and gold —

73.
‘Let a vast assembly be,
And with great solemnity
Declare with measured words that ye
Are, as God has made ye, free —

74.
‘Be your strong and simple words
Keen to wound as sharpened swords,
And wide as targes let them be,
With their shade to cover ye.

75.
‘Let the tyrants pour around
With a quick and startling sound,
Like the loosening of a sea,
Troops of armed emblazonry.

76.
‘Let the charged artillery drive
Till the dead air seems alive
With the clash of clanging wheels,
And the tramp of horses’ heels.

77.
‘Let the fixed bayonet
Gleam with sharp desire to wet
Its bright point in English blood
Looking keen as one for food.

78.
Let the horsemen’s scimitars
Wheel and flash, like sphereless stars
Thirsting to eclipse their burning
In a sea of death and mourning.

79.
‘Stand ye calm and resolute,
Like a forest close and mute,
With folded arms and looks which are
Weapons of unvanquished war,

80.
‘And let Panic, who outspeeds
The career of armed steeds
Pass, a disregarded shade
Through your phalanx undismayed.

81.
‘Let the laws of your own land,

Good or ill, between ye stand
Hand to hand, and foot to foot,
Arbiters of the dispute,

82.
‘The old laws of England — they
Whose reverend heads with age are gray,
Children of a wiser day;
And whose solemn voice must be
Thine own echo — Liberty!

83.
‘On those who first should violate
Such sacred heralds in their state
Rest the blood that must ensue,
And it will not rest on you.

84.
‘And if then the tyrants dare
Let them ride among you there,
Slash, and stab, and maim, and hew, —
What they like, that let them do.

85.
‘With folded arms and steady eyes,
And little fear, and less surprise,
Look upon them as they slay
Till their rage has died away.

86.
Then they will return with shame
To the place from which they came,
And the blood thus shed will speak
In hot blushes on their cheek.

87.
‘Every woman in the land
Will point at them as they stand —

They will hardly dare to greet
Their acquaintance in the street.

88.
‘And the bold, true warriors
Who have hugged Danger in wars
Will turn to those who would be free,
Ashamed of such base company.

89.
‘And that slaughter to the Nation
Shall steam up like inspiration,
Eloquent, oracular;
A volcano heard afar.

90.
‘And these words shall then become
Like Oppression’s thundered doom
Ringing through each heart and brain,
Heard again — again — again —

91.
‘Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number —
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you —
Ye are many — they are few.’

THE WITCH OF ATLAS

Composed at the Baths of San Giuliano, near Pisa, August 14-16, 1820; published in Posthumous Poems, edition Mrs. Shelley, 1824. The dedication To Mas-y first appeared in the Poetical Works, 1839, 1st edition Sources of the text are (1) the editio princeps, 1824; (2) editions 1839 (which agree, and, save in two instances, follow edition 1824); (3) an early and incomplete manuscript in Shelley's handwriting (now at the Bodleian, here, as throughout, cited as B.), carefully collated by Mr. C.D. Locock, who printed the results in his Examination of the Shelley manuscripts, etc., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1903; (4) a later, yet intermediate, transcript by Mrs. Shelley, the variations of which are noted by Mr. H. Buxton Forman.

TO MARY (ON HER OBJECTING TO THE FOLLOWING POEM, UPON THE SCORE OF ITS CONTAINING NO HUMAN INTEREST).

1.
How, my dear Mary, — are you critic-bitten
(For vipers kill, though dead) by some review,
That you condemn these verses I have written,
Because they tell no story, false or true?
What, though no mice are caught by a young kitten,
May it not leap and play as grown cats do,
Till its claws come? Prithee, for this one time,
Content thee with a visionary rhyme.

2.
What hand would crush the silken-winged fly,
The youngest of inconstant April's minions,
Because it cannot climb the purest sky,
Where the swan sings, amid the sun's dominions?
Not thine. Thou knowest 'tis its doom to die,
When Day shall hide within her twilight pinions
The lucent eyes, and the eternal smile,
Serene as thine, which lent it life awhile.

3.
To thy fair feet a winged Vision came,
Whose date should have been longer than a day,
And o'er thy head did beat its wings for fame,
And in thy sight its fading plumes display;
The watery bow burned in the evening flame.
But the shower fell, the swift Sun went his way —
And that is dead. — O, let me not believe
That anything of mine is fit to live!

4.
Wordsworth informs us he was nineteen years
Considering and retouching Peter Bell;

Watering his laurels with the killing tears
Of slow, dull care, so that their roots to Hell
Might pierce, and their wide branches blot the spheres
Of Heaven, with dewy leaves and flowers; this well
May be, for Heaven and Earth conspire to foil
The over-busy gardener's blundering toil.

5.
My Witch indeed is not so sweet a creature
As Ruth or Lucy, whom his graceful praise
Clothes for our grandsons — but she matches Peter,
Though he took nineteen years, and she three days
In dressing. Light the vest of flowing metre
She wears; he, proud as dandy with his stays,
Has hung upon his wiry limbs a dress
Like King Lear's 'looped and windowed raggedness.'

6.
If you strip Peter, you will see a fellow
Scorched by Hell's hyperequatorial climate
Into a kind of a sulphureous yellow:
A lean mark, hardly fit to fling a rhyme at;
In shape a Scaramouch, in hue Othello.
If you unveil my Witch, no priest nor primate
Can shrive you of that sin, — if sin there be
In love, when it becomes idolatry.

THE WITCH OF ATLAS.

1.
Before those cruel Twins, whom at one birth
Incestuous Change bore to her father Time,
Error and Truth, had hunted from the Earth
All those bright natures which adorned its prime,
And left us nothing to believe in, worth
The pains of putting into learned rhyme,
A lady-witch there lived on Atlas' mountain
Within a cavern, by a secret fountain.

2.
Her mother was one of the Atlantides:
The all-beholding Sun had ne'er beholden
In his wide voyage o'er continents and seas
So fair a creature, as she lay enfolden
In the warm shadow of her loveliness; —
He kissed her with his beams, and made all golden
The chamber of gray rock in which she lay —
She, in that dream of joy, dissolved away.

3.
'Tis said, she first was changed into a vapour,
And then into a cloud, such clouds as flit,
Like splendour-winged moths about a taper,
Round the red west when the sun dies in it:
And then into a meteor, such as caper
On hill-tops when the moon is in a fit:
Then, into one of those mysterious stars
Which hide themselves between the Earth and Mars.

4.
Ten times the Mother of the Months had bent
Her bow beside the folding-star, and bidden
With that bright sign the billows to indent
The sea-deserted sand — like children chidden,

At her command they ever came and went —
Since in that cave a dewy splendour hidden
Took shape and motion: with the living form
Of this embodied Power, the cave grew warm.

5.
A lovely lady garmented in light
From her own beauty — deep her eyes, as are
Two openings of unfathomable night
Seen through a Temple's cloven roof — her hair
Dark — the dim brain whirls dizzy with delight.
Picturing her form; her soft smiles shone afar,
And her low voice was heard like love, and drew
All living things towards this wonder new.

6.
And first the spotted cameleopard came,
And then the wise and fearless elephant;
Then the sly serpent, in the golden flame
Of his own volumes intervolved; — all gaunt
And sanguine beasts her gentle looks made tame.
They drank before her at her sacred fount;
And every beast of beating heart grew bold,
Such gentleness and power even to behold.

7.
The brinded lioness led forth her young,
That she might teach them how they should forego
Their inborn thirst of death; the pard unstrung
His sinews at her feet, and sought to know
With looks whose motions spoke without a tongue
How he might be as gentle as the doe.
The magic circle of her voice and eyes
All savage natures did imparadise.

8.
And old Silenus, shaking a green stick
Of lilies, and the wood-gods in a crew

Came, blithe, as in the olive copses thick
Cicadae are, drunk with the noonday dew:
And Dryope and Faunus followed quick,
Teasing the God to sing them something new;
Till in this cave they found the lady lone,
Sitting upon a seat of emerald stone.

9.
And universal Pan, ‘tis said, was there,
And though none saw him, — through the adamant
Of the deep mountains, through the trackless air,
And through those living spirits, like a want,
He passed out of his everlasting lair
Where the quick heart of the great world doth pant,
And felt that wondrous lady all alone, —
And she felt him, upon her emerald throne.

10.
And every nymph of stream and spreading tree,
And every shepherdess of Ocean’s flocks,
Who drives her white waves over the green sea,
And Ocean with the brine on his gray locks,
And quaint Priapus with his company,
All came, much wondering how the enwombed rocks
Could have brought forth so beautiful a birth; —
Her love subdued their wonder and their mirth.

11.
The herdsmen and the mountain maidens came,
And the rude kings of pastoral Garamant —
Their spirits shook within them, as a flame
Stirred by the air under a cavern gaunt:
Pigmies, and Polyphemes, by many a name,
Centaurs, and Satyrs, and such shapes as haunt
Wet clefts, — and lumps neither alive nor dead,
Dog-headed, bosom-eyed, and bird-footed.

12.
For she was beautiful — her beauty made
The bright world dim, and everything beside
Seemed like the fleeting image of a shade:
No thought of living spirit could abide,
Which to her looks had ever been betrayed,
On any object in the world so wide,
On any hope within the circling skies,
But on her form, and in her inmost eyes.

13.
Which when the lady knew, she took her spindle
And twined three threads of fleecy mist, and three
Long lines of light, such as the dawn may kindle
The clouds and waves and mountains with; and she
As many star-beams, ere their lamps could dwindle
In the belated moon, wound skilfully;
And with these threads a subtle veil she wove —
A shadow for the splendour of her love.

14.
The deep recesses of her odorous dwelling
Were stored with magic treasures — sounds of air,
Which had the power all spirits of compelling,
Folded in cells of crystal silence there;
Such as we hear in youth, and think the feeling
Will never die — yet ere we are aware,
The feeling and the sound are fled and gone,
And the regret they leave remains alone.

15.
And there lay Visions swift, and sweet, and quaint,
Each in its thin sheath, like a chrysalis,
Some eager to burst forth, some weak and faint
With the soft burthen of intensest bliss.
It was its work to bear to many a saint
Whose heart adores the shrine which holiest is,

Even Love's: — and others white, green, gray, and black,
And of all shapes — and each was at her beck.

16.
And odours in a kind of aviary
Of ever-blooming Eden-trees she kept,
Clipped in a floating net, a love-sick Fairy
Had woven from dew-beams while the moon yet slept;
As bats at the wired window of a dairy,
They beat their vans; and each was an adept,
When loosed and missioned, making wings of winds,
To stir sweet thoughts or sad, in destined minds.

17.
And liquors clear and sweet, whose healthful might
Could medicine the sick soul to happy sleep,
And change eternal death into a night
Of glorious dreams — or if eyes needs must weep,
Could make their tears all wonder and delight,
She in her crystal vials did closely keep:
If men could drink of those clear vials, 'tis said
The living were not envied of the dead.

18.
Her cave was stored with scrolls of strange device,
The works of some Saturnian Archimage,
Which taught the expiations at whose price
Men from the Gods might win that happy age
Too lightly lost, redeeming native vice;
And which might quench the Earth-consuming rage
Of gold and blood — till men should live and move
Harmonious as the sacred stars above;

19.
And how all things that seem untameable,
Not to be checked and not to be confined,
Obey the spells of Wisdom's wizard skill;
Time, earth, and fire — the ocean and the wind,

And all their shapes — and man's imperial will;
And other scrolls whose writings did unbind
The inmost lore of Love — let the profane
Tremble to ask what secrets they contain.

20.
And wondrous works of substances unknown,
To which the enchantment of her father's power
Had changed those ragged blocks of savage stone,
Were heaped in the recesses of her bower;
Carved lamps and chalices, and vials which shone
In their own golden beams — each like a flower,
Out of whose depth a fire-fly shakes his light
Under a cypress in a starless night.

21.
At first she lived alone in this wild home,
And her own thoughts were each a minister,
Clothing themselves, or with the ocean foam,
Or with the wind, or with the speed of fire,
To work whatever purposes might come
Into her mind; such power her mighty Sire
Had girt them with, whether to fly or run,
Through all the regions which he shines upon.

22.
The Ocean-nymphs and Hamadryades,
Oreads and Naiads, with long weedy locks,
Offered to do her bidding through the seas,
Under the earth, and in the hollow rocks,
And far beneath the matted roots of trees,
And in the gnarled heart of stubborn oaks,
So they might live for ever in the light
Of her sweet presence — each a satellite.

23.
'This may not be,' the wizard maid replied;
'The fountains where the Naiades bedew

Their shining hair, at length are drained and dried;
The solid oaks forget their strength, and strew
Their latest leaf upon the mountains wide;
The boundless ocean like a drop of dew
Will be consumed — the stubborn centre must
Be scattered, like a cloud of summer dust.

24.
‘And ye with them will perish, one by one; —
If I must sigh to think that this shall be,
If I must weep when the surviving Sun
Shall smile on your decay — oh, ask not me
To love you till your little race is run;
I cannot die as ye must — over me
Your leaves shall glance — the streams in which ye dwell
Shall be my paths henceforth, and so — farewell!’ —

25.
She spoke and wept: — the dark and azure well
Sparkled beneath the shower of her bright tears,
And every little circlet where they fell
Flung to the cavern-roof inconstant spheres
And intertangled lines of light: — a knell
Of sobbing voices came upon her ears
From those departing Forms, o’er the serene
Of the white streams and of the forest green.

26.
All day the wizard lady sate aloof,
Spelling out scrolls of dread antiquity,
Under the cavern’s fountain-lighted roof;
Or broidering the pictured poesy
Of some high tale upon her growing woof,
Which the sweet splendour of her smiles could dye
In hues outshining heaven — and ever she
Added some grace to the wrought poesy.

27.
While on her hearth lay blazing many a piece
Of sandal wood, rare gums, and cinnamon;
Men scarcely know how beautiful fire is —
Each flame of it is as a precious stone
Dissolved in ever-moving light, and this
Belongs to each and all who gaze upon.
The Witch beheld it not, for in her hand
She held a woof that dimmed the burning brand.

28.
This lady never slept, but lay in trance
All night within the fountain — as in sleep.
Its emerald crags glowed in her beauty's glance;
Through the green splendour of the water deep
She saw the constellations reel and dance
Like fire-flies — and withal did ever keep
The tenour of her contemplations calm,
With open eyes, closed feet, and folded palm.

29.
And when the whirlwinds and the clouds descended
From the white pinnacles of that cold hill,
She passed at dewfall to a space extended,
Where in a lawn of flowering asphodel
Amid a wood of pines and cedars blended,
There yawned an inextinguishable well
Of crimson fire — full even to the brim,
And overflowing all the margin trim.

30.
Within the which she lay when the fierce war
Of wintry winds shook that innocuous liquor
In many a mimic moon and bearded star
O'er woods and lawns; — the serpent heard it flicker
In sleep, and dreaming still, he crept afar —
And when the windless snow descended thicker

Than autumn leaves, she watched it as it came
Melt on the surface of the level flame.

31.
She had a boat, which some say Vulcan wrought
For Venus, as the chariot of her star;
But it was found too feeble to be fraught
With all the ardours in that sphere which are,
And so she sold it, and Apollo bought
And gave it to this daughter: from a car
Changed to the fairest and the lightest boat
Which ever upon mortal stream did float.

32.
And others say, that, when but three hours old,
The first-born Love out of his cradle lept,
And clove dun Chaos with his wings of gold,
And like a horticultural adept,
Stole a strange seed, and wrapped it up in mould,
And sowed it in his mother's star, and kept
Watering it all the summer with sweet dew,
And with his wings fanning it as it grew.

33.
The plant grew strong and green, the snowy flower
Fell, and the long and gourd-like fruit began
To turn the light and dew by inward power
To its own substance; woven tracery ran
Of light firm texture, ribbed and branching, o'er
The solid rind, like a leaf's veined fan —
Of which Love scooped this boat — and with soft motion
Piloted it round the circumfluous ocean.

34.
This boat she moored upon her fount, and lit
A living spirit within all its frame,
Breathing the soul of swiftness into it.
Couched on the fountain like a panther tame,

One of the twain at Evan's feet that sit —
Or as on Vesta's sceptre a swift flame —
Or on blind Homer's heart a winged thought, —
In joyous expectation lay the boat.

35.
Then by strange art she kneaded fire and snow
Together, tempering the repugnant mass
With liquid love — all things together grow
Through which the harmony of love can pass;
And a fair Shape out of her hands did flow —
A living Image, which did far surpass
In beauty that bright shape of vital stone
Which drew the heart out of Pygmalion.

36.
A sexless thing it was, and in its growth
It seemed to have developed no defect
Of either sex, yet all the grace of both, —
In gentleness and strength its limbs were decked;
The bosom swelled lightly with its full youth,
The countenance was such as might select
Some artist that his skill should never die,
Imaging forth such perfect purity.

37.
From its smooth shoulders hung two rapid wings,
Fit to have borne it to the seventh sphere,
Tipped with the speed of liquid lightenings,
Dyed in the ardours of the atmosphere:
She led her creature to the boiling springs
Where the light boat was moored, and said: 'Sit here!'
And pointed to the prow, and took her seat
Beside the rudder, with opposing feet.

38.
And down the streams which clove those mountains vast,
Around their inland islets, and amid

The panther-peopled forests whose shade cast
Darkness and odours, and a pleasure hid
In melancholy gloom, the pinnace passed;
By many a star-surrounded pyramid
Of icy crag cleaving the purple sky,
And caverns yawning round unfathomably.

39.
The silver noon into that winding dell,
With slanted gleam athwart the forest tops,
Tempered like golden evening, feebly fell;
A green and glowing light, like that which drops
From folded lilies in which glow-worms dwell,
When Earth over her face Night's mantle wraps;
Between the severed mountains lay on high,
Over the stream, a narrow rift of sky.

40.
And ever as she went, the Image lay
With folded wings and unawakened eyes;
And o'er its gentle countenance did play
The busy dreams, as thick as summer flies,
Chasing the rapid smiles that would not stay,
And drinking the warm tears, and the sweet sighs
Inhaling, which, with busy murmur vain,
They had aroused from that full heart and brain.

41.
And ever down the prone vale, like a cloud
Upon a stream of wind, the pinnace went:
Now lingering on the pools, in which abode
The calm and darkness of the deep content
In which they paused; now o'er the shallow road
Of white and dancing waters, all besprent
With sand and polished pebbles: — mortal boat
In such a shallow rapid could not float.

42.
And down the earthquaking cataracts which shiver
Their snow-like waters into golden air,
Or under chasms unfathomable ever
Sepulchre them, till in their rage they tear
A subterranean portal for the river,
It fled — the circling sunbows did upbear
Its fall down the hoar precipice of spray,
Lighting it far upon its lampless way.

43.
And when the wizard lady would ascend
The labyrinths of some many-winding vale,
Which to the inmost mountain upward tend —
She called ‘Hermaphroditus!’ — and the pale
And heavy hue which slumber could extend
Over its lips and eyes, as on the gale
A rapid shadow from a slope of grass,
Into the darkness of the stream did pass.

44.
And it unfurled its heaven-coloured pinions,
With stars of fire spotting the stream below;
And from above into the Sun’s dominions
Flinging a glory, like the golden glow
In which Spring clothes her emerald-winged minions,
All interwoven with fine feathery snow
And moonlight splendour of intensest rime,
With which frost paints the pines in winter time.

45.
And then it winnowed the Elysian air
Which ever hung about that lady bright,
With its aethereal vans — and speeding there,
Like a star up the torrent of the night,
Or a swift eagle in the morning glare
Breasting the whirlwind with impetuous flight,

The pinnace, oared by those enchanted wings,
Clove the fierce streams towards their upper springs.

46.
The water flashed, like sunlight by the prow
Of a noon-wandering meteor flung to Heaven;
The still air seemed as if its waves did flow
In tempest down the mountains; loosely driven
The lady's radiant hair streamed to and fro:
Beneath, the billows having vainly striven
Indignant and impetuous, roared to feel
The swift and steady motion of the keel.

47.
Or, when the weary moon was in the wane,
Or in the noon of interlunar night,
The lady-witch in visions could not chain
Her spirit; but sailed forth under the light
Of shooting stars, and bade extend amain
Its storm-outspeeding wings, the Hermaphrodite;
She to the Austral waters took her way,
Beyond the fabulous Thamondocana, —

48.
Where, like a meadow which no scythe has shaven,
Which rain could never bend, or whirl-blast shake,
With the Antarctic constellations paven,
Canopus and his crew, lay the Austral lake —
There she would build herself a windless haven
Out of the clouds whose moving turrets make
The bastions of the storm, when through the sky
The spirits of the tempest thundered by:

49.
A haven beneath whose translucent floor
The tremulous stars sparkled unfathomably,
And around which the solid vapours hoar,
Based on the level waters, to the sky

Lifted their dreadful crags, and like a shore
Of wintry mountains, inaccessibly
Hemmed in with rifts and precipices gray,
And hanging crags, many a cove and bay.

50.
And whilst the outer lake beneath the lash
Of the wind's scourge, foamed like a wounded thing,
And the incessant hail with stony clash
Ploughed up the waters, and the flagging wing
Of the roused cormorant in the lightning flash
Looked like the wreck of some wind-wandering
Fragment of inky thunder-smoke — this haven
Was as a gem to copy Heaven engraven, —

51.
On which that lady played her many pranks,
Circling the image of a shooting star,
Even as a tiger on Hydaspes' banks
Outspeeds the antelopes which speediest are,
In her light boat; and many quips and cranks
She played upon the water, till the car
Of the late moon, like a sick matron wan,
To journey from the misty east began.

52.
And then she called out of the hollow turrets
Of those high clouds, white, golden and vermilion,
The armies of her ministering spirits —
In mighty legions, million after million,
They came, each troop emblazoning its merits
On meteor flags; and many a proud pavilion
Of the intertexture of the atmosphere
They pitched upon the plain of the calm mere.

53.
They framed the imperial tent of their great Queen
Of woven exhalations, underlaid

With lambent lightning-fire, as may be seen
A dome of thin and open ivory inlaid
With crimson silk — cressets from the serene
Hung there, and on the water for her tread
A tapestry of fleece-like mist was strewn,
Dyed in the beams of the ascending moon.

54.
And on a throne o'erlaid with starlight, caught
Upon those wandering isles of aery dew,
Which highest shoals of mountain shipwreck not,
She sate, and heard all that had happened new
Between the earth and moon, since they had brought
The last intelligence — and now she grew
Pale as that moon, lost in the watery night —
And now she wept, and now she laughed outright.

55.
These were tame pleasures; she would often climb
The steepest ladder of the crudded rack
Up to some beaked cape of cloud sublime,
And like Arion on the dolphin's back
Ride singing through the shoreless air; — oft-time
Following the serpent lightning's winding track,
She ran upon the platforms of the wind,
And laughed to bear the fire-balls roar behind.

56.
And sometimes to those streams of upper air
Which whirl the earth in its diurnal round,
She would ascend, and win the spirits there
To let her join their chorus. Mortals found
That on those days the sky was calm and fair,
And mystic snatches of harmonious sound
Wandered upon the earth where'er she passed,
And happy thoughts of hope, too sweet to last.

57.
But her choice sport was, in the hours of sleep,
To glide adown old Nilus, where he threads
Egypt and Aethiopia, from the steep
Of utmost Axume, until he spreads,
Like a calm flock of silver-fleeced sheep,
His waters on the plain: and crested heads
Of cities and proud temples gleam amid,
And many a vapour-belted pyramid.

58.
By Moeris and the Mareotid lakes,
Strewn with faint blooms like bridal chamber floors,
Where naked boys bridling tame water-snakes,
Or charioteering ghastly alligators,
Had left on the sweet waters mighty wakes
Of those huge forms — within the brazen doors
Of the great Labyrinth slept both boy and beast,
Tired with the pomp of their Osirian feast.

59.
And where within the surface of the river
The shadows of the massy temples lie,
And never are erased — but tremble ever
Like things which every cloud can doom to die,
Through lotus-paven canals, and wheresoever
The works of man pierced that serenest sky
With tombs, and towers, and fanes, ‘twas her delight
To wander in the shadow of the night.

60.
With motion like the spirit of that wind
Whose soft step deepens slumber, her light feet
Passed through the peopled haunts of humankind.
Scattering sweet visions from her presence sweet,
Through fane, and palace-court, and labyrinth mined
With many a dark and subterranean street

Under the Nile, through chambers high and deep
She passed, observing mortals in their sleep.

61.
A pleasure sweet doubtless it was to see
Mortals subdued in all the shapes of sleep.
Here lay two sister twins in infancy;
There, a lone youth who in his dreams did weep;
Within, two lovers linked innocently
In their loose locks which over both did creep
Like ivy from one stem; — and there lay calm
Old age with snow-bright hair and folded palm.

62.
But other troubled forms of sleep she saw,
Not to be mirrored in a holy song —
Distortions foul of supernatural awe,
And pale imaginings of visioned wrong;
And all the code of Custom's lawless law
Written upon the brows of old and young:
'This,' said the wizard maiden, 'is the strife
Which stirs the liquid surface of man's life.'

63.
And little did the sight disturb her soul. —
We, the weak mariners of that wide lake
Where'er its shores extend or billows roll,
Our course unpiloted and starless make
O'er its wild surface to an unknown goal: —
But she in the calm depths her way could take,
Where in bright bowers immortal forms abide
Beneath the weltering of the restless tide.

64.
And she saw princes couched under the glow
Of sunlike gems; and round each temple-court
In dormitories ranged, row after row,
She saw the priests asleep — all of one sort —

For all were educated to be so. —
The peasants in their huts, and in the port
The sailors she saw cradled on the waves,
And the dead lulled within their dreamless graves.

65.
And all the forms in which those spirits lay
Were to her sight like the diaphanous
Veils, in which those sweet ladies oft array
Their delicate limbs, who would conceal from us
Only their scorn of all concealment: they
Move in the light of their own beauty thus.
But these and all now lay with sleep upon them,
And little thought a Witch was looking on them.

66.
She, all those human figures breathing there,
Beheld as living spirits — to her eyes
The naked beauty of the soul lay bare,
And often through a rude and worn disguise
She saw the inner form most bright and fair —
And then she had a charm of strange device,
Which, murmured on mute lips with tender tone,
Could make that spirit mingle with her own.

67.
Alas! Aurora, what wouldst thou have given
For such a charm when Tithon became gray?
Or how much, Venus, of thy silver heaven
Wouldst thou have yielded, ere Proserpina
Had half (oh! why not all?) the debt forgiven
Which dear Adonis had been doomed to pay,
To any witch who would have taught you it?
The Heliad doth not know its value yet.

68.
‘Tis said in after times her spirit free
Knew what love was, and felt itself alone —

But holy Dian could not chaster be
Before she stooped to kiss Endymion,
Than now this lady — like a sexless bee
Tasting all blossoms, and confined to none,
Among those mortal forms, the wizard-maiden
Passed with an eye serene and heart unladen.

69.
To those she saw most beautiful, she gave
Strange panacea in a crystal bowl: —
They drank in their deep sleep of that sweet wave,
And lived thenceforward as if some control,
Mightier than life, were in them; and the grave
Of such, when death oppressed the weary soul,
Was as a green and overarching bower
Lit by the gems of many a starry flower.

70.
For on the night when they were buried, she
Restored the embalmers' ruining, and shook
The light out of the funeral lamps, to be
A mimic day within that deathy nook;
And she unwound the woven imagery
Of second childhood's swaddling bands, and took
The coffin, its last cradle, from its niche,
And threw it with contempt into a ditch.

71.
And there the body lay, age after age.
Mute, breathing, beating, warm, and undecaying,
Like one asleep in a green hermitage,
With gentle smiles about its eyelids playing,
And living in its dreams beyond the rage
Of death or life; while they were still arraying
In liveries ever new, the rapid, blind
And fleeting generations of mankind.

72.
And she would write strange dreams upon the brain
Of those who were less beautiful, and make
All harsh and crooked purposes more vain
Than in the desert is the serpent's wake
Which the sand covers — all his evil gain
The miser in such dreams would rise and shake
Into a beggar's lap; — the lying scribe
Would his own lies betray without a bribe.

73.
The priests would write an explanation full,
Translating hieroglyphics into Greek,
How the God Apis really was a bull,
And nothing more; and bid the herald stick
The same against the temple doors, and pull
The old cant down; they licensed all to speak
Whate'er they thought of hawks, and cats, and geese,
By pastoral letters to each diocese.

74.
The king would dress an ape up in his crown
And robes, and seat him on his glorious seat,
And on the right hand of the sunlike throne
Would place a gaudy mock-bird to repeat
The chatterings of the monkey. — Every one
Of the prone courtiers crawled to kiss the feet
Of their great Emperor, when the morning came,
And kissed — alas, how many kiss the same!

75.
The soldiers dreamed that they were blacksmiths, and
Walked out of quarters in somnambulism;
Round the red anvils you might see them stand
Like Cyclopses in Vulcan's sooty abysm,
Beating their swords to ploughshares; — in a band
The gaolers sent those of the liberal schism

Free through the streets of Memphis, much, I wis,
To the annoyance of king Amasis.

76.
And timid lovers who had been so coy,
They hardly knew whether they loved or not,
Would rise out of their rest, and take sweet joy,
To the fulfilment of their inmost thought;
And when next day the maiden and the boy
Met one another, both, like sinners caught,
Blushed at the thing which each believed was done
Only in fancy — till the tenth moon shone;

77.
And then the Witch would let them take no ill:
Of many thousand schemes which lovers find,
The Witch found one, — and so they took their fill
Of happiness in marriage warm and kind.
Friends who, by practice of some envious skill,
Were torn apart — a wide wound, mind from mind! —
She did unite again with visions clear
Of deep affection and of truth sincere.

80.
These were the pranks she played among the cities
Of mortal men, and what she did to Sprites
And Gods, entangling them in her sweet ditties
To do her will, and show their subtle sleights,
I will declare another time; for it is
A tale more fit for the weird winter nights
Than for these garish summer days, when we
Scarcely believe much more than we can see.

EPIPSYCHIDION

VERSES ADDRESSED TO THE NOBLE AND UNFORTUNATE LADY,
EMILIA V — ,
NOW IMPRISONED IN THE CONVENT OF — .

L'anima amante si slancia fuori del creato, e si crea nell' infinito un
Mondo tutto per essa, diverso assai da questo oscuro e pauroso baratro.
HER OWN WORDS.

Epipsychidion was composed at Pisa, January, February, 1821, and published without the author's name, in the following summer, by C. & J. Ollier, London. The poem was included by Mrs. Shelley in the "Poetical Works", 1839, both editions. Amongst the Shelley manuscripts in the Bodleian is a first draft of "Epipsychidion", 'consisting of three versions, more or less complete, of the "Preface [Advertisement]", a version in ink and pencil, much cancelled, of the last eighty lines of the poem, and some additional lines which did not appear in print' ("Examination of the Shelley manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, by C.D. Locock". Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1903, page 3). This draft, the writing of which is 'extraordinarily confused and illegible,' has been carefully deciphered and printed by Mr. Locock in the volume named above. Our text follows that of the editio princeps, 1821.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The Writer of the following lines died at Florence, as he was preparing for a voyage to one of the wildest of the Sporades, which he had bought, and where he had fitted up the ruins of an old building, and where it was his hope to have realised a scheme of life, suited perhaps to that happier and better world of which he is now an inhabitant, but hardly practicable in this. His life was singular; less on account of the romantic vicissitudes which diversified it, than the ideal tinge which it received from his own character and feelings. The present Poem, like the "Vita Nuova" of Dante, is sufficiently intelligible to a certain class of readers without a matter-of-fact history of the circumstances to which it relates and to a certain other class it must ever remain incomprehensible, from a defect of a common organ of perception for the ideas of which it treats. Not but that gran vergogna sarebbe a colui, che rimasse cosa sotto veste di figura, o di colore rettorico: e domandato non sapesse denudare le sue parole da cotal veste, in guisa che avessero verace intendimento.

The present poem appears to have been intended by the Writer as the dedication to some longer one. The stanza on the opposite page is almost a literal translation from Dante's famous Canzone

Voi, ch' intendendo, il terzo ciel movete, etc.

The presumptuous application of the concluding lines to his own composition will raise a smile at the expense of my unfortunate friend: be it a smile not of contempt, but pity. S.

i.e. the nine lines which follow, beginning, 'My Song, I fear,' etc. — ED.

My Song, I fear that thou wilt find but few
Who fitly shalt conceive thy reasoning,
Of such hard matter dost thou entertain;
Whence, if by misadventure, chance should bring
Thee to base company (as chance may do),
Quite unaware of what thou dost contain,
I prithee, comfort thy sweet self again,

My last delight! tell them that they are dull,
And bid them own that thou art beautiful.

EPIPSYCHIDION.

Sweet Spirit! Sister of that orphan one,
Whose empire is the name thou weepest on,
In my heart's temple I suspend to thee
These votive wreaths of withered memory.

Poor captive bird! who, from thy narrow cage,
Pourest such music, that it might assuage
The rugged hearts of those who prisoned thee,
Were they not deaf to all sweet melody;
This song shall be thy rose: its petals pale
Are dead, indeed, my adored Nightingale!
But soft and fragrant is the faded blossom,
And it has no thorn left to wound thy bosom.

High, spirit-winged Heart! who dost for ever
Beat thine unfeeling bars with vain endeavour,
Till those bright plumes of thought, in which arrayed
It over-soared this low and worldly shade,
Lie shattered; and thy panting, wounded breast
Stains with dear blood its unmaternal nest!
I weep vain tears: blood would less bitter be,
Yet poured forth gladlier, could it profit thee.

Seraph of Heaven! too gentle to be human,
Veiling beneath that radiant form of Woman
All that is insupportable in thee
Of light, and love, and immortality!
Sweet Benediction in the eternal Curse!
Veiled Glory of this lampless Universe!
Thou Moon beyond the clouds! Thou living Form
Among the Dead! Thou Star above the Storm!
Thou Wonder, and thou Beauty, and thou Terror!
Thou Harmony of Nature's art! Thou Mirror
In whom, as in the splendour of the Sun,
All shapes look glorious which thou gazest on!

Ay, even the dim words which obscure thee now
Flash, lightning-like, with unaccustomed glow;
I pray thee that thou blot from this sad song
All of its much mortality and wrong,
With those clear drops, which start like sacred dew
From the twin lights thy sweet soul darkens through,
Weeping, till sorrow becomes ecstasy:
Then smile on it, so that it may not die.

I never thought before my death to see
Youth's vision thus made perfect. Emily,
I love thee; though the world by no thin name
Will hide that love from its unvalued shame.
Would we two had been twins of the same mother!
Or, that the name my heart lent to another
Could be a sister's bond for her and thee,
Blending two beams of one eternity!
Yet were one lawful and the other true,
These names, though dear, could paint not, as is due.
How beyond refuge I am thine. Ah me!
I am not thine: I am a part of THEE.

Sweet Lamp! my moth-like Muse has burned its wings
Or, like a dying swan who soars and sings,
Young Love should teach Time, in his own gray style,
All that thou art. Art thou not void of guile,
A lovely soul formed to be blessed and bless?
A well of sealed and secret happiness,
Whose waters like blithe light and music are,
Vanquishing dissonance and gloom? A Star
Which moves not in the moving heavens, alone?
A Smile amid dark frowns? a gentle tone
Amid rude voices? a beloved light?
A Solitude, a Refuge, a Delight?
A Lute, which those whom Love has taught to play
Make music on, to soothe the roughest day
And lull fond Grief asleep? a buried treasure?

A cradle of young thoughts of wingless pleasure?
A violet-shrouded grave of Woe? — I measure
The world of fancies, seeking one like thee,
And find — alas! mine own infirmity.

She met me, Stranger, upon life's rough way,
And lured me towards sweet Death; as Night by Day,
Winter by Spring, or Sorrow by swift Hope,
Led into light, life, peace. An antelope,
In the suspended impulse of its lightness,
Were less aethereally light: the brightness
Of her divinest presence trembles through
Her limbs, as underneath a cloud of dew
Embodied in the windless heaven of June
Amid the splendour-winged stars, the Moon
Burns, inextinguishably beautiful:
And from her lips, as from a hyacinth full
Of honey-dew, a liquid murmur drops,
Killing the sense with passion; sweet as stops
Of planetary music heard in trance.
In her mild lights the starry spirits dance,
The sunbeams of those wells which ever leap
Under the lightnings of the soul — too deep
For the brief fathom-line of thought or sense.
The glory of her being, issuing thence,
Stains the dead, blank, cold air with a warm shade
Of unentangled intermixture, made
By Love, of light and motion: one intense
Diffusion, one serene Omnipresence,
Whose flowing outlines mingle in their flowing,
Around her cheeks and utmost fingers glowing
With the unintermitted blood, which there
Quivers, (as in a fleece of snow-like air
The crimson pulse of living morning quiver,)
Continuously prolonged, and ending never,
Till they are lost, and in that Beauty furled
Which penetrates and clasps and fills the world;

Scarce visible from extreme loveliness.
Warm fragrance seems to fall from her light dress
And her loose hair; and where some heavy tress
The air of her own speed has disentwined,
The sweetness seems to satiate the faint wind;
And in the soul a wild odour is felt
Beyond the sense, like fiery dews that melt
Into the bosom of a frozen bud. —
See where she stands! a mortal shape indued
With love and life and light and deity,
And motion which may change but cannot die;
An image of some bright Eternity;
A shadow of some golden dream; a Splendour
Leaving the third sphere pilotless; a tender
Reflection of the eternal Moon of Love
Under whose motions life's dull billows move;
A Metaphor of Spring and Youth and Morning;
A Vision like incarnate April, warning,
With smiles and tears, Frost the Anatomy
Into his summer grave.
Ah, woe is me!
What have I dared? where am I lifted? how
Shall I descend, and perish not? I know
That Love makes all things equal: I have heard
By mine own heart this joyous truth averred:
The spirit of the worm beneath the sod
In love and worship, blends itself with God.

Spouse! Sister! Angel! Pilot of the Fate
Whose course has been so starless! O too late
Beloved! O too soon adored, by me!
For in the fields of Immortality
My spirit should at first have worshipped thine,
A divine presence in a place divine;
Or should have moved beside it on this earth,
A shadow of that substance, from its birth;
But not as now: — I love thee; yes, I feel

That on the fountain of my heart a seal
Is set, to keep its waters pure and bright
For thee, since in those

TEARS thou hast delight.
We — are we not formed, as notes of music are,
For one another, though dissimilar;
Such difference without discord, as can make
Those sweetest sounds, in which all spirits shake
As trembling leaves in a continuous air?

Thy wisdom speaks in me, and bids me dare
Beacon the rocks on which high hearts are wrecked.
I never was attached to that great sect,
Whose doctrine is, that each one should select
Out of the crowd a mistress or a friend,
And all the rest, though fair and wise, commend
To cold oblivion, though it is in the code
Of modern morals, and the beaten road
Which those poor slaves with weary footsteps tread,
Who travel to their home among the dead
By the broad highway of the world, and so
With one chained friend, perhaps a jealous foe,
The dreariest and the longest journey go.

True Love in this differs from gold and clay,
That to divide is not to take away.
Love is like understanding, that grows bright,
Gazing on many truths; ‘tis like thy light,
Imagination! which from earth and sky,
And from the depths of human fantasy,
As from a thousand prisms and mirrors, fills
The Universe with glorious beams, and kills
Error, the worm, with many a sun-like arrow
Of its reverberated lightning. Narrow
The heart that loves, the brain that contemplates,
The life that wears, the spirit that creates

One object, and one form, and builds thereby
A sepulchre for its eternity.

Mind from its object differs most in this:
Evil from good; misery from happiness;
The baser from the nobler; the impure
And frail, from what is clear and must endure.
If you divide suffering and dross, you may
Diminish till it is consumed away;
If you divide pleasure and love and thought,
Each part exceeds the whole; and we know not
How much, while any yet remains unshared,
Of pleasure may be gained, of sorrow spared:
This truth is that deep well, whence sages draw
The unenvied light of hope; the eternal law
By which those live, to whom this world of life
Is as a garden ravaged, and whose strife
Tills for the promise of a later birth
The wilderness of this Elysian earth.

There was a Being whom my spirit oft
Met on its visioned wanderings, far aloft,
In the clear golden prime of my youth's dawn,
Upon the fairy isles of sunny lawn,
Amid the enchanted mountains, and the caves
Of divine sleep, and on the air-like waves
Of wonder-level dream, whose tremulous floor
Paved her light steps; — on an imagined shore,
Under the gray beak of some promontory
She met me, robed in such exceeding glory,
That I beheld her not. In solitudes
Her voice came to me through the whispering woods,
And from the fountains, and the odours deep
Of flowers, which, like lips murmuring in their sleep
Of the sweet kisses which had lulled them there,
Breathed but of HER to the enamoured air;
And from the breezes whether low or loud,

And from the rain of every passing cloud,
And from the singing of the summer-birds,
And from all sounds, all silence. In the words
Of antique verse and high romance, — in form,
Sound, colour — in whatever checks that Storm
Which with the shattered present chokes the past;
And in that best philosophy, whose taste
Makes this cold common hell, our life, a doom
As glorious as a fiery martyrdom;
Her Spirit was the harmony of truth. —

Then, from the caverns of my dreamy youth
I sprang, as one sandalled with plumes of fire,
And towards the lodestar of my one desire,
I flitted, like a dizzy moth, whose flight
Is as a dead leaf's in the owlet light,
When it would seek in Hesper's setting sphere
A radiant death, a fiery sepulchre,
As if it were a lamp of earthly flame. —
But She, whom prayers or tears then could not tame,
Passed, like a God throned on a winged planet,
Whose burning plumes to tenfold swiftness fan it,
Into the dreary cone of our life's shade;
And as a man with mighty loss dismayed,
I would have followed, though the grave between
Yawned like a gulf whose spectres are unseen:
When a voice said:—'O thou of hearts the weakest,
The phantom is beside thee whom thou seekest.'
Then I—'Where?' — the world's echo answered 'where?'
And in that silence, and in my despair,
I questioned every tongueless wind that flew
Over my tower of mourning, if it knew
Whither 'twas fled, this soul out of my soul;
And murmured names and spells which have control
Over the sightless tyrants of our fate;
But neither prayer nor verse could dissipate
The night which closed on her; nor uncreate

That world within this Chaos, mine and me,
Of which she was the veiled Divinity,
The world I say of thoughts that worshipped her:
And therefore I went forth, with hope and fear
And every gentle passion sick to death,
Feeding my course with expectation's breath,
Into the wintry forest of our life;
And struggling through its error with vain strife,
And stumbling in my weakness and my haste,
And half bewildered by new forms, I passed,
Seeking among those untaught foresters
If I could find one form resembling hers,
In which she might have masked herself from me.
There, — One, whose voice was venomed melody
Sate by a well, under blue nightshade bowers:
The breath of her false mouth was like faint flowers,
Her touch was as electric poison, — flame
Out of her looks into my vitals came,
And from her living cheeks and bosom flew
A killing air, which pierced like honey-dew
Into the core of my green heart, and lay
Upon its leaves; until, as hair grown gray
O'er a young brow, they hid its unblown prime
With ruins of unseasonable time.

In many mortal forms I rashly sought
The shadow of that idol of my thought.
And some were fair — but beauty dies away:
Others were wise — but honeyed words betray:
And One was true — oh! why not true to me?
Then, as a hunted deer that could not flee,
I turned upon my thoughts, and stood at bay,
Wounded and weak and panting; the cold day
Trembled, for pity of my strife and pain.
When, like a noonday dawn, there shone again
Deliverance. One stood on my path who seemed
As like the glorious shape which I had d reamed

As is the Moon, whose changes ever run
Into themselves, to the eternal Sun;
The cold chaste Moon, the Queen of Heaven's bright isles,
Who makes all beautiful on which she smiles,
That wandering shrine of soft yet icy flame
Which ever is transformed, yet still the same,
And warms not but illumines. Young and fair
As the descended Spirit of that sphere,
She hid me, as the Moon may hide the night
From its own darkness, until all was bright
Between the Heaven and Earth of my calm mind,
And, as a cloud charioted by the wind,
She led me to a cave in that wild place,
And sate beside me, with her downward face
Illumining my slumbers, like the Moon
Waxing and waning o'er Endymion.
And I was laid asleep, spirit and limb,
And all my being became bright or dim
As the Moon's image in a summer sea,
According as she smiled or frowned on me;
And there I lay, within a chaste cold bed:
Alas, I then was nor alive nor dead: —
For at her silver voice came Death and Life,
Unmindful each of their accustomed strife,
Masked like twin babes, a sister and a brother,
The wandering hopes of one abandoned mother,
And through the cavern without wings they flew,
And cried 'Away, he is not of our crew.'
I wept, and though it be a dream, I weep.

What storms then shook the ocean of my sleep,
Blotting that Moon, whose pale and waning lips
Then shrank as in the sickness of eclipse; —
And how my soul was as a lampless sea,
And who was then its Tempest; and when She,
The Planet of that hour, was quenched, what frost
Crept o'er those waters, till from coast to coast

The moving billows of my being fell
Into a death of ice, immovable; —
And then — what earthquakes made it gape and split,
The white Moon smiling all the while on it,
These words conceal: — If not, each word would be
The key of staunchless tears. Weep not for me!

At length, into the obscure Forest came
The Vision I had sought through grief and shame.
Athwart that wintry wilderness of thorns
Flashed from her motion splendour like the Morn's,
And from her presence life was radiated
Through the gray earth and branches bare and dead;
So that her way was paved, and roofed above
With flowers as soft as thoughts of budding love;
And music from her respiration spread
Like light, — all other sounds were penetrated
By the small, still, sweet spirit of that sound,
So that the savage winds hung mute around;
And odours warm and fresh fell from her hair
Dissolving the dull cold in the frore air:
Soft as an Incarnation of the Sun,
When light is changed to love, this glorious One
Floated into the cavern where I lay,
And called my Spirit, and the dreaming clay
Was lifted by the thing that dreamed below
As smoke by fire, and in her beauty's glow
I stood, and felt the dawn of my long night
Was penetrating me with living light:
I knew it was the Vision veiled from me
So many years — that it was Emily.

Twin Spheres of light who rule this passive Earth,
This world of loves, this ME; and into birth
Awaken all its fruits and flowers, and dart
Magnetic might into its central heart;
And lift its billows and its mists, and guide

By everlasting laws, each wind and tide
To its fit cloud, and its appointed cave;
And lull its storms, each in the craggy grave
Which was its cradle, luring to faint bowers
The armies of the rainbow-winged showers;
And, as those married lights, which from the towers
Of Heaven look forth and fold the wandering globe
In liquid sleep and splendour, as a robe;
And all their many-mingled influence blend,
If equal, yet unlike, to one sweet end; —
So ye, bright regents, with alternate sway
Govern my sphere of being, night and day!
Thou, not disdaining even a borrowed might;
Thou, not eclipsing a remoter light;
And, through the shadow of the seasons three,
From Spring to Autumn's sere maturity,
Light it into the Winter of the tomb,
Where it may ripen to a brighter bloom.
Thou too, O Comet beautiful and fierce,
Who drew the heart of this frail Universe
Towards thine own; till, wrecked in that convulsion,
Alternating attraction and repulsion,
Thine went astray and that was rent in twain;
Oh, float into our azure heaven again!
Be there Love's folding-star at thy return;
The living Sun will feed thee from its urn
Of golden fire; the Moon will veil her horn
In thy last smiles; adoring Even and Morn
Will worship thee with incense of calm breath
And lights and shadows; as the star of Death
And Birth is worshipped by those sisters wild
Called Hope and Fear — upon the heart are piled
Their offerings, — of this sacrifice divine
A World shall be the altar.
Lady mine,
Scorn not these flowers of thought, the fading birth
Which from its heart of hearts that plant puts forth

Whose fruit, made perfect by thy sunny eyes,
Will be as of the trees of Paradise.

The day is come, and thou wilt fly with me.
To whatsoe'er of dull mortality
Is mine, remain a vestal sister still;
To the intense, the deep, the imperishable,
Not mine but me, henceforth be thou united
Even as a bride, delighting and delighted.
The hour is come: — the destined Star has risen
Which shall descend upon a vacant prison.
The walls are high, the gates are strong, thick set
The sentinels — but true Love never yet
Was thus constrained: it overleaps all fence:
Like lightning, with invisible violence
Piercing its continents; like Heaven's free breath,
Which he who grasps can hold not; liker Death,
Who rides upon a thought, and makes his way
Through temple, tower, and palace, and the array
Of arms: more strength has Love than he or they;
For it can burst his charnel, and make free
The limbs in chains, the heart in agony,
The soul in dust and chaos.
Emily,
A ship is floating in the harbour now,
A wind is hovering o'er the mountain's brow;
There is a path on the sea's azure floor,
No keel has ever ploughed that path before;
The halcyons brood around the foamless isles;
The treacherous Ocean has forsworn its wiles;
The merry mariners are bold and free:
Say, my heart's sister, wilt thou sail with me?
Our bark is as an albatross, whose nest
Is a far Eden of the purple East;
And we between her wings will sit, while Night,
And Day, and Storm, and Calm, pursue their flight,
Our ministers, along the boundless Sea,

Treading each other's heels, unheededly.
It is an isle under Ionian skies,
Beautiful as a wreck of Paradise,
And, for the harbours are not safe and good,
This land would have remained a solitude
But for some pastoral people native there,
Who from the Elysian, clear, and golden air
Draw the last spirit of the age of gold,
Simple and spirited; innocent and bold.
The blue Aegean girds this chosen home,
With ever-changing sound and light and foam,
Kissing the sifted sands, and caverns hoar;
And all the winds wandering along the shore
Undulate with the undulating tide:
There are thick woods where sylvan forms abide;
And many a fountain, rivulet, and pond,
As clear as elemental diamond,
Or serene morning air; and far beyond,
The mossy tracks made by the goats and deer
(Which the rough shepherd treads but once a year)
Pierce into glades, caverns, and bowers, and halls
Built round with ivy, which the waterfalls
Illumining, with sound that never fails
Accompany the noonday nightingales;
And all the place is peopled with sweet airs;
The light clear element which the isle wears
Is heavy with the scent of lemon-flowers,
Which floats like mist laden with unseen showers.
And falls upon the eyelids like faint sleep;
And from the moss violets and jonquils peep,
And dart their arrowy odour through the brain
Till you might faint with that delicious pain.
And every motion, odour, beam and tone,
With that deep music is in unison:
Which is a soul within the soul — they seem
Like echoes of an antenatal dream. —
It is an isle 'twixt Heaven, Air, Earth, and Sea,

Cradled, and hung in clear tranquillity;
Bright as that wandering Eden Lucifer,
Washed by the soft blue Oceans of young air.
It is a favoured place. Famine or Blight,
Pestilence, War and Earthquake, never light
Upon its mountain-peaks; blind vultures, they
Sail onward far upon their fatal way:
The winged storms, chanting their thunder-psalm
To other lands, leave azure chasms of calm
Over this isle, or weep themselves in dew,
From which its fields and woods ever renew
Their green and golden immortality.
And from the sea there rise, and from the sky
There fall, clear exhalations, soft and bright.
Veil after veil, each hiding some delight,
Which Sun or Moon or zephyr draw aside,
Till the isle's beauty, like a naked bride
Glowing at once with love and loveliness,
Blushes and trembles at its own excess:
Yet, like a buried lamp, a Soul no less
Burns in the heart of this delicious isle,
An atom of th' Eternal, whose own smile
Unfolds itself, and may be felt, not seen
O'er the gray rocks, blue waves, and forests green,
Filling their bare and void interstices. —
But the chief marvel of the wilderness
Is a lone dwelling, built by whom or how
None of the rustic island-people know:
'Tis not a tower of strength, though with its height
It overtops the woods; but, for delight,
Some wise and tender Ocean-King, ere crime
Had been invented, in the world's young prime,
Reared it, a wonder of that simple time,
An envy of the isles, a pleasure-house
Made sacred to his sister and his spouse.
It scarce seems now a wreck of human art,
But, as it were Titanic; in the heart

Of Earth having assumed its form, then grown
Out of the mountains, from the living stone,
Lifting itself in caverns light and high:
For all the antique and learned imagery
Has been erased, and in the place of it
The ivy and the wild-vine interknit
The volumes of their many-twining stems;
Parasite flowers illume with dewy gems
The lampless halls, and when they fade, the sky
Peeps through their winter-woof of tracery
With moonlight patches, or star atoms keen,
Or fragments of the day's intense serene; —
Working mosaic on their Parian floors.
And, day and night, aloof, from the high towers
And terraces, the Earth and Ocean seem
To sleep in one another's arms, and dream
Of waves, flowers, clouds, woods, rocks, and all that we
Read in their smiles, and call reality.

This isle and house are mine, and I have vowed
Thee to be lady of the solitude. —
And I have fitted up some chambers there
Looking towards the golden Eastern air,
And level with the living winds, which flow
Like waves above the living waves below. —
I have sent books and music there, and all
Those instruments with which high Spirits call
The future from its cradle, and the past
Out of its grave, and make the present last
In thoughts and joys which sleep, but cannot die,
Folded within their own eternity.
Our simple life wants little, and true taste
Hires not the pale drudge Luxury, to waste
The scene it would adorn, and therefore still,
Nature with all her children haunts the hill.
The ring-dove, in the embowering ivy, yet
Keeps up her love-lament, and the owls flit

Round the evening tower, and the young stars glance
Between the quick bats in their twilight dance;
The spotted deer bask in the fresh moonlight
Before our gate, and the slow, silent night
Is measured by the pants of their calm sleep.
Be this our home in life, and when years heap
Their withered hours, like leaves, on our decay,
Let us become the overhanging day,
The living soul of this Elysian isle,
Conscious, inseparable, one. Meanwhile
We two will rise, and sit, and walk together,
Under the roof of blue Ionian weather,
And wander in the meadows, or ascend
The mossy mountains, where the blue heavens bend
With lightest winds, to touch their paramour;
Or linger, where the pebble-paven shore,
Under the quick, faint kisses of the sea
Trembles and sparkles as with ecstasy, —
Possessing and possessed by all that is
Within that calm circumference of bliss,
And by each other, till to love and live
Be one: — or, at the noontide hour, arrive
Where some old cavern hoar seems yet to keep
The moonlight of the expired night asleep,
Through which the awakened day can never peep;
A veil for our seclusion, close as night's,
Where secure sleep may kill thine innocent lights:
Sleep, the fresh dew of languid love, the rain
Whose drops quench kisses till they burn again.
And we will talk, until thought's melody
Become too sweet for utterance, and it die
In words, to live again in looks, which dart
With thrilling tone into the voiceless heart,
Harmonizing silence without a sound.
Our breath shall intermix, our bosoms bound,
And our veins beat together; and our lips
With other eloquence than words, eclipse

The soul that burns between them, and the wells
Which boil under our being's inmost cells,
The fountains of our deepest life, shall be
Confused in Passion's golden purity,
As mountain-springs under the morning sun.
We shall become the same, we shall be one
Spirit within two frames, oh! wherefore two?
One passion in twin-hearts, which grows and grew,
Till like two meteors of expanding flame,
Those spheres instinct with it become the same,
Touch, mingle, are transfigured; ever still
Burning, yet ever inconsumable:
In one another's substance finding food,
Like flames too pure and light and unimbued
To nourish their bright lives with baser prey,
Which point to Heaven and cannot pass away:
One hope within two wills, one will beneath
Two overshadowing minds, one life, one death,
One Heaven, one Hell, one immortality,
And one annihilation. Woe is me!
The winged words on which my soul would pierce
Into the height of Love's rare Universe,
Are chains of lead around its flight of fire —
I pant, I sink, I tremble, I expire!

…

Weak Verses, go, kneel at your Sovereign's feet,
And say:—'We are the masters of thy slave;
What wouldest thou with us and ours and thine?'
Then call your sisters from Oblivion's cave,
All singing loud: 'Love's very pain is sweet,
But its reward is in the world divine
Which, if not here, it builds beyond the grave.'
So shall ye live when I am there. Then haste
Over the hearts of men, until ye meet
Marina, Vanna, Primus, and the rest,

And bid them love each other and be blessed:
And leave the troop which errs, and which reproves,
And come and be my guest, — for I am Love's.

FRAGMENTS CONNECTED WITH EPIPSYCHIDION.

[Of the fragments of verse that follow, lines 1-37, 62-92 were printed by Mrs. Shelley in "Posthumous Works", 1839, 2nd edition; lines 1-174 were printed or reprinted by Dr. Garnett in "Relics of Shelley", 1862; and lines 175-186 were printed by Mr. C.D. Locock from the first draft of "Epipsychidion" amongst the Shelley manuscripts in the Bodleian Library. See "Examination, etc.", 1903, pages 12, 13. The three early drafts of the "Preface (Advertisement)" were printed by Mr. Locock in the same volume, pages 4, 5.]

THREE EARLY DRAFTS OF THE PREFACE.

(ADVERTISEMENT.)

PREFACE 1.

The following Poem was found amongst other papers in the Portfolio of a young Englishman with whom the Editor had contracted an intimacy at Florence, brief indeed, but sufficiently long to render the Catastrophe by which it terminated one of the most painful events of his life. —

The literary merit of the Poem in question may not be considerable; but worse verses are printed every day, &

He was an accomplished & amiable person but his error was, thuntos on un thunta phronein, — his fate is an additional proof that 'The tree of Knowledge is not that of Life.' — He had framed to himself certain opinions, founded no doubt upon the truth of things, but built up to a Babel height; they fell by their own weight, & the thoughts that were his architects, became unintelligible one to the other, as men upon whom confusion of tongues has fallen.

[These] verses seem to have been written as a sort of dedication of some work to have been presented to the person whom they address: but his

papers afford no trace of such a work — The circumstances to which [they] the poem allude, may easily be understood by those to whom [the] spirit of the poem itself is [un]intelligible: a detail of facts, sufficiently romantic in [themselves but] their combinations

The melancholy [task] charge of consigning the body of my poor friend to the grave, was committed to me by his desolated family. I caused him to be buried in a spot selected by himself, & on the h

PREFACE 2.

[Epips] T. E. V. Epipsych
Lines addressed to
the Noble Lady
[Emilia] [E. V.]
Emilia

[The following Poem was found in the PF. of a young Englishman, who died on his passage from Leghorn to the Levant. He had bought one of the Sporades] He was accompanied by a lady [who might have been] supposed to be his wife, & an effeminate looking youth, to whom he shewed an [attachment] so [singular] excessive an attachment as to give rise to the suspicion, that she was a woman — At his death this suspicion was confirmed;…object speedily found a refuge both from the taunts of the brute multitude, and from the…of her grief in the same grave that contained her lover. — He had bought one of the Sporades, & fitted up a Saracenic castle which accident had preserved in some repair with simple elegance, & it was his intention to dedicate the remainder of his life to undisturbed intercourse with his companions

These verses apparently were intended as a dedication of a longer poem or series of poems

PREFACE 3.

The writer of these lines died at Florence in [January 1820] while he was preparing * * for one wildest of the of the Sporades, where he bought & fitted up the ruins of some old building — His life was singular, less on account of the romantic vicissitudes which diversified it, than the ideal tinge which they received from his own character & feelings —

The verses were apparently intended by the writer to accompany some longer poem or collection of poems, of which there* [are no remnants in his] * * * remains [in his] portfolio. —

The editor is induced to

The present poem, like the vita Nova of Dante, is sufficiently intelligible to a certain class of readers without a matter of fact history of the circumstances to which it relate, & to a certain other class, it must & ought ever to remain incomprehensible — It was evidently intended to be prefixed to a longer poem or series of poems — but among his papers there are no traces of such a collection.

PASSAGES OF THE POEM, OR CONNECTED THEREWITH.

Here, my dear friend, is a new book for you;
I have already dedicated two
To other friends, one female and one male, —
What you are, is a thing that I must veil;
What can this be to those who praise or rail?
I never was attached to that great sect
Whose doctrine is that each one should select
Out of the world a mistress or a friend,
And all the rest, though fair and wise, commend
To cold oblivion — though ‘tis in the code
Of modern morals, and the beaten road
Which those poor slaves with weary footsteps tread
Who travel to their home among the dead
By the broad highway of the world — and so

With one sad friend, and many a jealous foe,
The dreariest and the longest journey go.

Free love has this, different from gold and clay,
That to divide is not to take away.
Like ocean, which the general north wind breaks
Into ten thousand waves, and each one makes
A mirror of the moon — like some great glass,
Which did distort whatever form might pass,
Dashed into fragments by a playful child,
Which then reflects its eyes and forehead mild;
Giving for one, which it could ne'er express,
A thousand images of loveliness.

If I were one whom the loud world held wise,
I should disdain to quote authorities
In commendation of this kind of love: —
Why there is first the God in heaven above,
Who wrote a book called Nature, 'tis to be
Reviewed, I hear, in the next Quarterly;
And Socrates, the Jesus Christ of Greece,
And Jesus Christ Himself, did never cease
To urge all living things to love each other,
And to forgive their mutual faults, and smother
The Devil of disunion in their souls.

…

I love you! — Listen, O embodied Ray
Of the great Brightness; I must pass away
While you remain, and these light words must be
Tokens by which you may remember me.
Start not — the thing you are is unbetrayed,
If you are human, and if but the shade
Of some sublimer spirit…

…

And as to friend or mistress, ‘tis a form;
Perhaps I wish you were one. Some declare
You a familiar spirit, as you are;
Others with a … more inhuman
Hint that, though not my wife, you are a woman;
What is the colour of your eyes and hair?
Why, if you were a lady, it were fair
The world should know — but, as I am afraid,
The Quarterly would bait you if betrayed;
And if, as it will be sport to see them stumble
Over all sorts of scandals. hear them mumble
Their litany of curses — some guess right,
And others swear you’re a Hermaphrodite;
Like that sweet marble monster of both sexes,
Which looks so sweet and gentle that it vexes
The very soul that the soul is gone
Which lifted from her limbs the veil of stone.

…

It is a sweet thing, friendship, a dear balm,
A happy and auspicious bird of calm,
Which rides o’er life’s ever tumultuous Ocean;
A God that broods o’er chaos in commotion;
A flower which fresh as Lapland roses are,
Lifts its bold head into the world’s frore air,
And blooms most radiantly when others die,
Health, hope, and youth, and brief prosperity;
And with the light and odour of its bloom,
Shining within the dun eon and the tomb;
Whose coming is as light and music are
‘Mid dissonance and gloom — a star
Which moves not ‘mid the moving heavens alone —
A smile among dark frowns — a gentle tone
Among rude voices, a beloved light,
A solitude, a refuge, a delight.
If I had but a friend! Why, I have three

Even by my own confession; there may be
Some more, for what I know, for ‘tis my mind
To call my friends all who are wise and kind,-
And these, Heaven knows, at best are very few;
But none can ever be more dear than you.
Why should they be? My muse has lost her wings,
Or like a dying swan who soars and sings,
I should describe you in heroic style,
But as it is, are you not void of guile?
A lovely soul, formed to be blessed and bless:
A well of sealed and secret happiness;
A lute which those whom Love has taught to play
Make music on to cheer the roughest day,
And enchant sadness till it sleeps?…

…

To the oblivion whither I and thou,
All loving and all lovely, hasten now
With steps, ah, too unequal! may we meet
In one Elysium or one winding-sheet!

If any should be curious to discover
Whether to you I am a friend or lover,
Let them read Shakespeare’s sonnets, taking thence
A whetstone for their dull intelligence
That tears and will not cut, or let them guess
How Diotima, the wise prophetess,
Instructed the instructor, and why he
Rebuked the infant spirit of melody
On Agathon’s sweet lips, which as he spoke
Was as the lovely star when morn has broke
The roof of darkness, in the golden dawn,
Half-hidden, and yet beautiful.
I’ll pawn
My hopes of Heaven-you know what they are worth —
That the presumptuous pedagogues of Earth,

If they could tell the riddle offered here
Would scorn to be, or being to appear
What now they seem and are — but let them chide,
They have few pleasures in the world beside;
Perhaps we should be dull were we not chidden,
Paradise fruits are sweetest when forbidden.
Folly can season Wisdom, Hatred Love.

…

Farewell, if it can be to say farewell
To those who

…

I will not, as most dedicators do,
Assure myself and all the world and you,
That you are faultless — would to God they were
Who taunt me with your love! I then should wear
These heavy chains of life with a light spirit,
And would to God I were, or even as near it
As you, dear heart. Alas! what are we? Clouds
Driven by the wind in warring multitudes,
Which rain into the bosom of the earth,
And rise again, and in our death and birth,
And through our restless life, take as from heaven
Hues which are not our own, but which are given,
And then withdrawn, and with inconstant glance
Flash from the spirit to the countenance.
There is a Power, a Love, a Joy, a God
Which makes in mortal hearts its brief abode,
A Pythian exhalation, which inspires
Love, only love — a wind which o’er the wires
Of the soul’s giant harp
There is a mood which language faints beneath;
You feel it striding, as Almighty Death
His bloodless steed…

…

And what is that most brief and bright delight
Which rushes through the touch and through the sight,
And stands before the spirit's inmost throne,
A naked Seraph? None hath ever known.
Its birth is darkness, and its growth desire;
Untameable and fleet and fierce as fire,
Not to be touched but to be felt alone,
It fills the world with glory-and is gone.

…

It floats with rainbow pinions o'er the stream
Of life, which flows, like a … dream
Into the light of morning, to the grave
As to an ocean…

…

What is that joy which serene infancy
Perceives not, as the hours content them by,
Each in a chain of blossoms, yet enjoys
The shapes of this new world, in giant toys
Wrought by the busy … ever new?
Remembrance borrows Fancy's glass, to show
These forms more … sincere
Than now they are, than then, perhaps, they were.
When everything familiar seemed to be
Wonderful, and the immortality
Of this great world, which all things must inherit,
Was felt as one with the awakening spirit,
Unconscious of itself, and of the strange
Distinctions which in its proceeding change
It feels and knows, and mourns as if each were
A desolation…

…

Were it not a sweet refuge, Emily,
For all those exiles from the dull insane
Who vex this pleasant world with pride and pain,
For all that band of sister-spirits known
To one another by a voiceless tone?

…

If day should part us night will mend division
And if sleep parts us — we will meet in vision
And if life parts us — we will mix in death
Yielding our mite [?] of unreluctant breath
Death cannot part us — we must meet again
In all in nothing in delight in pain:
How, why or when or where — it matters not
So that we share an undivided lot…

…

And we will move possessing and possessed
Wherever beauty on the earth's bare [?] breast
Lies like the shadow of thy soul — till we
Become one being with the world we see…

ADONAIS

AN ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF JOHN KEATS, AUTHOR OF ENDYMION, HYPERION, ETC.

Aster prin men elampes eni zooisin Eoos nun de thanon lampeis Esperos en phthimenois. — PLATO.

Adonais was composed at Pisa during the early days of June, 1821, and printed, with the author's name, at Pisa, 'with the types of Didot,' by July 13, 1821. Part of the impression was sent to the brothers Ollier for sale in London. An exact reprint of this Pisa edition (a few typographical errors only being corrected) was issued in 1829 by Gee & Bridges, Cambridge, at the instance of Arthur Hallam and Richard Monckton Milnes (Lord Houghton). The poem was included in Galignani's edition of "Coleridge, Shelley and Keats", Paris, 1829, and by Mrs. Shelley in the "Poetical Works" of 1839. Mrs. Shelley's text presents three important variations from that of the editio princeps. In 1876 an edition of the "Adonais", with Introduction and Notes, was printed for private circulation by Mr. H. Buxton Forman, C.B. Ten years later a reprint 'in exact facsimile' of the Pisa edition was edited with a Bibliographical Introduction by Mr. T.J. Wise ("Shelley Society Publications", 2nd Series, No. 1, Reeves & Turner, London, 1886).

PREFACE.

Pharmakon elthe, Bion, poti son stoma, pharmakon eides. pos ten tois cheilessi potesrame, kouk eglukanthe; tis de Brotos tossouton anameros, e kerasai toi, e dounai laleonti to pharmakon; ekphugen odan. — MOSCHUS, EPITAPH. BION**.**

It is my intention to subjoin to the London edition of this poem a criticism upon the claims of its lamented object to be classed among the writers of the highest genius who have adorned our age. My known repugnance to the narrow principles of taste on which several of his earlier compositions were modelled prove at least that I am an impartial judge. I consider the fragment of "Hyperion" as second to nothing that was ever produced by a writer of the same years.

John Keats died at Rome of a consumption, in his twenty-fourth year, on the — of — 1821; and was buried in the romantic and lonely cemetery of the Protestants in that city, under the pyramid which is the tomb of Cestius, and the massy walls and towers, now mouldering and desolate, which formed the circuit of ancient Rome. The cemetery is an open space among the ruins, covered in winter with violets and daisies. It might make one in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place.

The genius of the lamented person to whose memory I have dedicated these unworthy verses was not less delicate and fragile than it was beautiful; and where cankerworms abound, what wonder if its young flower was blighted in the bud? The savage criticism on his "Endymion", which appeared in the "Quarterly Review", produced the most violent effect on his susceptible mind; the agitation thus originated ended in the rupture of a blood-vessel in the lungs; a rapid consumption ensued, and the succeeding acknowledgements from more candid critics of the true greatness of his powers were ineffectual to heal the wound thus wantonly inflicted.

It may be well said that these wretched men know not what they do. They scatter their insults and their slanders without heed as to whether the poisoned shaft lights on a heart made callous by many blows or one like Keats's composed of more penetrable stuff. One of their associates is, to my knowledge, a most base and unprincipled calumniator. As to "Endymion", was it a poem, whatever might be its defects, to be treated contemptuously

by those who had celebrated, with various degrees of complacency and panegyric, “Paris”, and “Woman”, and a “Syrian Tale”, and Mrs. Lefanu, and Mr. Barrett, and Mr. Howard Payne, and a long list of the illustrious obscure? Are these the men who in their venal good nature presumed to draw a parallel between the Reverend Mr. Milman and Lord Byron? What gnat did they strain at here, after having swallowed all those camels? Against what woman taken in adultery dares the foremost of these literary prostitutes to cast his opprobrious stone? Miserable man! you, one of the meanest, have wantonly defaced one of the noblest specimens of the workmanship of God. Nor shall it be your excuse, that, murderer as you are, you have spoken daggers, but used none.

The circumstances of the closing scene of poor Keats’s life were not made known to me until the “Elegy” was ready for the press. I am given to understand that the wound which his sensitive spirit had received from the criticism of “Endymion” was exasperated by the bitter sense of unrequited benefits; the poor fellow seems to have been hooted from the stage of life, no less by those on whom he had wasted the promise of his genius, than those on whom he had lavished his fortune and his care. He was accompanied to Rome, and attended in his last illness by Mr. Severn, a young artist of the highest promise, who, I have been informed, ‘almost risked his own life, and sacrificed every prospect to unwearied attendance upon his dying friend.’ Had I known these circumstances before the completion of my poem, I should have been tempted to add my feeble tribute of applause to the more solid recompense which the virtuous man finds in the recollection of his own motives. Mr. Severn can dispense with a reward from ‘such stuff as dreams are made of.’ His conduct is a golden augury of the success of his future career — may the unextinguished Spirit of his illustrious friend animate the creations of his pencil, and plead against Oblivion for his name!

ADONAIS.

I weep for Adonais — he is dead!
O, weep for Adonais! though our tears
Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head!
And thou, sad Hour, selected from all years
To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,
And teach them thine own sorrow, say: “With me
Died Adonais; till the Future dares
Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be
An echo and a light unto eternity!”

2.
Where wert thou, mighty Mother, when he lay,
When thy Son lay, pierced by the shaft which flies
In darkness? where was lorn Urania
When Adonais died? With veiled eyes,
‘Mid listening Echoes, in her Paradise
She sate, while one, with soft enamoured breath,
Rekindled all the fading melodies,
With which, like flowers that mock the corse beneath,
He had adorned and hid the coming bulk of Death.

3.
Oh, weep for Adonais — he is dead!
Wake, melancholy Mother, wake and weep!
Yet wherefore? Quench within their burning bed
Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep
Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep;
For he is gone, where all things wise and fair
Descend; — oh, dream not that the amorous Deep
Will yet restore him to the vital air;
Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our despair.

4.
Most musical of mourners, weep again!
Lament anew, Urania! — He died,

Who was the Sire of an immortal strain,
Blind, old and lonely, when his country's pride,
The priest, the slave, and the liberticide,
Trampled and mocked with many a loathed rite
Of lust and blood; he went, unterrified,
Into the gulf of death; but his clear Sprite
Yet reigns o'er earth; the third among the sons of light.

5.
Most musical of mourners, weep anew!
Not all to that bright station dared to climb;
And happier they their happiness who knew,
Whose tapers yet burn through that night of time
In which suns perished; others more sublime,
Struck by the envious wrath of man or god,
Have sunk, extinct in their refulgent prime;
And some yet live, treading the thorny road,
Which leads, through toil and hate, to Fame's serene abode.

6.
But now, thy youngest, dearest one, has perished —
The nursling of thy widowhood, who grew,
Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished,
And fed with true-love tears, instead of dew;
Most musical of mourners, weep anew!
Thy extreme hope, the loveliest and the last,
The bloom, whose petals nipped before they blew
Died on the promise of the fruit, is waste;
The broken lily lies — the storm is overpast.

7.
To that high Capital, where kingly Death
Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay,
He came; and bought, with price of purest breath,
A grave among the eternal. — Come away!
Haste, while the vault of blue Italian day
Is yet his fitting charnel-roof! while still

He lies, as if in dewy sleep he lay;
Awake him not! surely he takes his fill
Of deep and liquid rest, forgetful of all ill.

8.
He will awake no more, oh, never more! —
Within the twilight chamber spreads apace
The shadow of white Death, and at the door
Invisible Corruption waits to trace
His extreme way to her dim dwelling-place;
The eternal Hunger sits, but pity and awe
Soothe her pale rage, nor dares she to deface
So fair a prey, till darkness and the law
Of change, shall o'er his sleep the mortal curtain draw.

9.
Oh, weep for Adonais! — The quick Dreams,
The passion-winged Ministers of thought,
Who were his flocks, whom near the living streams
Of his young spirit he fed, and whom he taught
The love which was its music, wander not, —
Wander no more, from kindling brain to brain,
But droop there, whence they sprung; and mourn their lot
Round the cold heart, where, after their sweet pain,
They ne'er will gather strength, or find a home again.

10.
And one with trembling hands clasps his cold head,
And fans him with her moonlight wings, and cries;
'Our love, our hope, our sorrow, is not dead;
See, on the silken fringe of his faint eyes,
Like dew upon a sleeping flower, there lies
A tear some Dream has loosened from his brain.'
Lost Angel of a ruined Paradise!
She knew not 'twas her own; as with no stain
She faded, like a cloud which had outwept its rain.

11.
One from a lucid urn of starry dew
Washed his light limbs as if embalming them;
Another clipped her profuse locks, and threw
The wreath upon him, like an anadem,
Which frozen tears instead of pearls begem;
Another in her wilful grief would break
Her bow and winged reeds, as if to stem
A greater loss with one which was more weak;
And dull the barbed fire against his frozen cheek.

12.
Another Splendour on his mouth alit,
That mouth, whence it was wont to draw the breath
Which gave it strength to pierce the guarded wit,
And pass into the panting heart beneath
With lightning and with music: the damp death
Quenched its caress upon his icy lips;
And, as a dying meteor stains a wreath
Of moonlight vapour, which the cold night clips,
It flushed through his pale limbs, and passed to its eclipse.

13.
And others came…Desires and Adorations,
Winged Persuasions and veiled Destinies,
Splendours, and Glooms, and glimmering Incarnations
Of hopes and fears, and twilight Phantasies;
And Sorrow, with her family of Sighs,
And Pleasure, blind with tears, led by the gleam
Of her own dying smile instead of eyes,
Came in slow pomp; — the moving pomp might seem
Like pageantry of mist on an autumnal stream.

14.
All he had loved, and moulded into thought,
From shape, and hue, and odour, and sweet sound,
Lamented Adonais. Morning sought

Her eastern watch-tower, and her hair unbound,
Wet with the tears which should adorn the ground,
Dimmed the aereal eyes that kindle day;
Afar the melancholy thunder moaned,
Pale Ocean in unquiet slumber lay,
And the wild Winds flew round, sobbing in their dismay.

15.
Lost Echo sits amid the voiceless mountains,
And feeds her grief with his remembered lay,
And will no more reply to winds or fountains,
Or amorous birds perched on the young green spray,
Or herdsman's horn, or bell at closing day;
Since she can mimic not his lips, more dear
Than those for whose disdain she pined away
Into a shadow of all sounds: — a drear
Murmur, between their songs, is all the woodmen hear.

16.
Grief made the young Spring wild, and she threw down
Her kindling buds, as if she Autumn were,
Or they dead leaves; since her delight is flown,
For whom should she have waked the sullen year?
To Phoebus was not Hyacinth so dear
Nor to himself Narcissus, as to both
Thou, Adonais: wan they stand and sere
Amid the faint companions of their youth,
With dew all turned to tears; odour, to sighing ruth.

17.
Thy spirit's sister, the lorn nightingale
Mourns not her mate with such melodious pain;
Not so the eagle, who like thee could scale
Heaven, and could nourish in the sun's domain
Her mighty youth with morning, doth complain,
Soaring and screaming round her empty nest,
As Albion wails for thee: the curse of Cain

Light on his head who pierced thy innocent breast,
And scared the angel soul that was its earthly guest!

18.
Ah, woe is me! Winter is come and gone,
But grief returns with the revolving year;
The airs and streams renew their joyous tone;
The ants, the bees, the swallows reappear;
Fresh leaves and flowers deck the dead Seasons' bier;
The amorous birds now pair in every brake,
And build their mossy homes in field and brere;
And the green lizard, and the golden snake,
Like unimprisoned flames, out of their trance awake.

19.
Through wood and stream and field and hill and Ocean
A quickening life from the Earth's heart has burst
As it has ever done, with change and motion,
From the great morning of the world when first
God dawned on Chaos; in its stream immersed,
The lamps of Heaven flash with a softer light;
All baser things pant with life's sacred thirst;
Diffuse themselves; and spend in love's delight,
The beauty and the joy of their renewed might.

20.
The leprous corpse, touched by this spirit tender,
Exhales itself in flowers of gentle breath;
Like incarnations of the stars, when splendour
Is changed to fragrance, they illumine death
And mock the merry worm that wakes beneath;
Nought we know, dies. Shall that alone which knows
Be as a sword consumed before the sheath
By sightless lightning? — the intense atom glows
A moment, then is quenched in a most cold repose.

21.
Alas! that all we loved of him should be,

But for our grief, as if it had not been,
And grief itself be mortal! Woe is me!
Whence are we, and why are we? of what scene
The actors or spectators? Great and mean
Meet massed in death, who lends what life must borrow.
As long as skies are blue, and fields are green,
Evening must usher night, night urge the morrow,
Month follow month with woe, and year wake year to sorrow.

22.
HE will awake no more, oh, never more!
'Wake thou,' cried Misery, 'childless Mother, rise
Out of thy sleep, and slake, in thy heart's core,
A wound more fierce than his, with tears and sighs.'
And all the Dreams that watched Urania's eyes,
And all the Echoes whom their sister's song
Had held in holy silence, cried: 'Arise!'
Swift as a Thought by the snake Memory stung,
From her ambrosial rest the fading Splendour sprung.

23.
She rose like an autumnal Night, that springs
Out of the East, and follows wild and drear
The golden Day, which, on eternal wings,
Even as a ghost abandoning a bier,
Had left the Earth a corpse. Sorrow and fear
So struck, so roused, so rapped Urania;
So saddened round her like an atmosphere
Of stormy mist; so swept her on her way
Even to the mournful place where Adonais lay.

24.
Out of her secret Paradise she sped,
Through camps and cities rough with stone, and steel,
And human hearts, which to her aery tread
Yielding not, wounded the invisible
Palms of her tender feet where'er they fell:

And barbed tongues, and thoughts more sharp than they,
Rent the soft Form they never could repel,
Whose sacred blood, like the young tears of May,
Paved with eternal flowers that undeserving way.

25.
In the death-chamber for a moment Death,
Shamed by the presence of that living Might,
Blushed to annihilation, and the breath
Revisited those lips, and Life's pale light
Flashed through those limbs, so late her dear delight.
'Leave me not wild and drear and comfortless,
As silent lightning leaves the starless night!
Leave me not!' cried Urania: her distress
Roused Death: Death rose and smiled, and met her vain caress.

26.
'Stay yet awhile! speak to me once again;
Kiss me, so long but as a kiss may live;
And in my heartless breast and burning brain
That word, that kiss, shall all thoughts else survive,
With food of saddest memory kept alive,
Now thou art dead, as if it were a part
Of thee, my Adonais! I would give
All that I am to be as thou now art!
But I am chained to Time, and cannot thence depart!

27.
'O gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,
Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of men
Too soon, and with weak hands though mighty heart
Dare the unpastured dragon in his den?
Defenceless as thou wert, oh, where was then
Wisdom the mirrored shield, or scorn the spear?
Or hadst thou waited the full cycle, when
Thy spirit should have filled its crescent sphere,
The monsters of life's waste had fled from thee like deer.

28.
‘The herded wolves, bold only to pursue;
The obscene ravens, clamorous o’er the dead;
The vultures to the conqueror’s banner true
Who feed where Desolation first has fed,
And whose wings rain contagion; — how they fled,
When, like Apollo, from his golden bow
The Pythian of the age one arrow sped
And smiled! — The spoilers tempt no second blow,
They fawn on the proud feet that spurn them lying low.

29.
‘The sun comes forth, and many reptiles spawn;
He sets, and each ephemeral insect then
Is gathered into death without a dawn,
And the immortal stars awake again;
So is it in the world of living men:
A godlike mind soars forth, in its delight
Making earth bare and veiling heaven, and when
It sinks, the swarms that dimmed or shared its light
Leave to its kindred lamps the spirit’s awful night.’

30.
Thus ceased she: and the mountain shepherds came,
Their garlands sere, their magic mantles rent;
The Pilgrim of Eternity, whose fame
Over his living head like Heaven is bent,
An early but enduring monument,
Came, veiling all the lightnings of his song
In sorrow; from her wilds Ierne sent
The sweetest lyrist of her saddest wrong,
And Love taught Grief to fall like music from his tongue.

31.
Midst others of less note, came one frail Form,
A phantom among men; companionless
As the last cloud of an expiring storm

Whose thunder is its knell; he, as I guess,
Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness,
Actaeon-like, and now he fled astray
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,
And his own thoughts, along that rugged way,
Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their prey.

32.
A pardlike Spirit beautiful and swift —
A Love in desolation masked; — a Power
Girt round with weakness; — it can scarce uplift
The weight of the superincumbent hour;
It is a dying lamp, a falling shower,
A breaking billow; — even whilst we speak
Is it not broken? On the withering flower
The killing sun smiles brightly: on a cheek
The life can burn in blood, even while the heart may break.

33.
His head was bound with pansies overblown,
And faded violets, white, and pied, and blue;
And a light spear topped with a cypress cone,
Round whose rude shaft dark ivy-tresses grew
Yet dripping with the forest's noonday dew,
Vibrated, as the ever-beating heart
Shook the weak hand that grasped it; of that crew
He came the last, neglected and apart;
A herd-abandoned deer struck by the hunter's dart.

34.
All stood aloof, and at his partial moan
Smiled through their tears; well knew that gentle band
Who in another's fate now wept his own,
As in the accents of an unknown land
He sung new sorrow; sad Urania scanned
The Stranger's mien, and murmured: 'Who art thou?'
He answered not, but with a sudden hand

Made bare his branded and ensanguined brow,
Which was like Cain's or Christ's — oh! that it should be so!

35.
What softer voice is hushed over the dead?
Athwart what brow is that dark mantle thrown?
What form leans sadly o'er the white death-bed,
In mockery of monumental stone,
The heavy heart heaving without a moan?
If it be He, who, gentlest of the wise,
Taught, soothed, loved, honoured the departed one,
Let me not vex, with inharmonious sighs,
The silence of that heart's accepted sacrifice.

36.
Our Adonais has drunk poison — oh!
What deaf and viperous murderer could crown
Life's early cup with such a draught of woe?
The nameless worm would now itself disown:
It felt, yet could escape, the magic tone
Whose prelude held all envy, hate and wrong,
But what was howling in one breast alone,
Silent with expectation of the song,
Whose master's hand is cold, whose silver lyre unstrung.

37.
Live thou, whose infamy is not thy fame!
Live! fear no heavier chastisement from me,
Thou noteless blot on a remembered name!
But be thyself, and know thyself to be!
And ever at thy season be thou free
To spill the venom when thy fangs o'erflow;
Remorse and Self-contempt shall cling to thee;
Hot Shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,
And like a beaten hound tremble thou shalt — as now.

38.
Nor let us weep that our delight is fled

Far from these carrion kites that scream below;
He wakes or sleeps with the enduring dead;
Thou canst not soar where he is sitting now —
Dust to the dust! but the pure spirit shall flow
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
A portion of the Eternal, which must glow
Through time and change, unquenchably the same,
Whilst thy cold embers choke the sordid hearth of shame.

39.
Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep —
He hath awakened from the dream of life —
'Tis we, who lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
And in mad trance, strike with our spirit's knife
Invulnerable nothings. — WE decay
Like corpses in a charnel; fear and grief
Convulse us and consume us day by day,
And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living clay.

40.
He has outsoared the shadow of our night;
Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown gray in vain;
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

41.
He lives, he wakes—'tis Death is dead, not he;
Mourn not for Adonais. — Thou young Dawn,
Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee
The spirit thou lamentest is not gone;
Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan!

Cease, ye faint flowers and fountains, and thou Air,
Which like a mourning veil thy scarf hadst thrown
O'er the abandoned Earth, now leave it bare
Even to the joyous stars which smile on its despair!

42.
He is made one with Nature: there is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird;
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own;
Which wields the world with never-wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

43.
He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely: he doth bear
His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there
All new successions to the forms they wear;
Torturing th' unwilling dross that checks its flight
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear;
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light.

44.
The splendours of the firmament of time
May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not;
Like stars to their appointed height they climb,
And death is a low mist which cannot blot
The brightness it may veil. When lofty thought
Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
And love and life contend in it, for what
Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there
And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air.

45.
The inheritors of unfulfilled renown
Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought,
Far in the Unapparent. Chatterton
Rose pale, — his solemn agony had not
Yet faded from him; Sidney, as he fought
And as he fell and as he lived and loved
Sublimely mild, a Spirit without spot,
Arose; and Lucan, by his death approved:
Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing reproved.

46.
And many more, whose names on Earth are dark,
But whose transmitted effluence cannot die
So long as fire outlives the parent spark,
Rose, robed in dazzling immortality.
'Thou art become as one of us,' they cry,
'It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long
Swung blind in unascended majesty,
Silent alone amid a Heaven of Song.
Assume thy winged throne, thou Vesper of our throng!'

47.
Who mourns for Adonais? Oh, come forth,
Fond wretch! and know thyself and him aright.
Clasp with thy panting soul the pendulous Earth;
As from a centre, dart thy spirit's light
Beyond all worlds, until its spacious might
Satiate the void circumference: then shrink
Even to a point within our day and night;
And keep thy heart light lest it make thee sink
When hope has kindled hope, and lured thee to the brink.

48.
Or go to Rome, which is the sepulchre,
Oh, not of him, but of our joy: 'tis nought
That ages, empires and religions there

Lie buried in the ravage they have wrought;
For such as he can lend, — they borrow not
Glory from those who made the world their prey;
And he is gathered to the kings of thought
Who waged contention with their time's decay,
And of the past are all that cannot pass away.

49.
Go thou to Rome, — at once the Paradise,
The grave, the city, and the wilderness;
And where its wrecks like shattered mountains rise,
And flowering weeds, and fragrant copses dress
The bones of Desolation's nakedness
Pass, till the spirit of the spot shall lead
Thy footsteps to a slope of green access
Where, like an infant's smile, over the dead
A light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread;

50.
And gray walls moulder round, on which dull Time
Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand;
And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,
Pavilioning the dust of him who planned
This refuge for his memory, doth stand
Like flame transformed to marble; and beneath,
A field is spread, on which a newer band
Have pitched in Heaven's smile their camp of death,
Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguished breath.

51.
Here pause: these graves are all too young as yet
To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned
Its charge to each; and if the seal is set,
Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind,
Break it not thou! too surely shalt thou find
Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind

Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
What Adonais is, why fear we to become?

52.
The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments. — Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
Follow where all is fled! — Rome's azure sky,
Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

53.
Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart?
Thy hopes are gone before: from all things here
They have departed; thou shouldst now depart!
A light is passed from the revolving year,
And man, and woman; and what still is dear
Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.
The soft sky smiles, — the low wind whispers near:
'Tis Adonais calls! oh, hasten thither,
No more let Life divide what Death can join together.

54.
That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That Beauty in which all things work and move,
That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst; now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

55.
The breath whose might I have invoked in song

Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven,
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given;
The massy earth and sphered skies are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;
Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

CANCELLED PASSAGES OF ADONAIS.

[Published by Dr. Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862.]

PASSAGES OF THE PREFACE.

…the expression of my indignation and sympathy. I will allow myself a first and last word on the subject of calumny as it relates to me. As an author I have dared and invited censure. If I understand myself, I have written neither for profit nor for fame. I have employed my poetical compositions and publications simply as the instruments of that sympathy between myself and others which the ardent and unbounded love I cherished for my kind incited me to acquire. I expected all sorts of stupidity and insolent contempt from those…

…These compositions (excepting the tragedy of "The Cenci", which was written rather to try my powers than to unburthen my full heart) are insufficiently…commendation than perhaps they deserve, even from their bitterest enemies; but they have not attained any corresponding popularity. As a man, I shrink from notice and regard; the ebb and flow of the world vexes me; I desire to be left in peace. Persecution, contumely, and calumny have been heaped upon me in profuse measure; and domestic conspiracy and legal oppression have violated in my person the most sacred rights of nature and humanity. The bigot will say it was the recompense of my errors; the man of the world will call it the result of my imprudence; but never upon one head…

…Reviewers, with some rare exceptions, are a most stupid and malignant race. As a bankrupt thief turns thieftaker in despair, so an unsuccessful author turns critic. But a young spirit panting for fame, doubtful of its powers, and certain only of its aspirations, is ill qualified to assign its true value to the sneer of this world. He knows not that such stuff as this is of the abortive and monstrous births which time consumes as fast as it produces. He sees the truth and falsehood, the merits and demerits, of his case inextricably entangled…No personal offence should have drawn from me this public comment upon such stuff…

…The offence of this poor victim seems to have consisted solely in his intimacy with Leigh Hunt, Mr. Hazlitt, and some other enemies of despotism and superstition. My friend Hunt has a very hard skull to crack, and will take a deal of killing. I do not know much of Mr. Hazlitt, but…

…I knew personally but little of Keats; but on the news of his situation I wrote to him, suggesting the propriety of trying the Italian climate, and inviting him to join me. Unfortunately he did not allow me…

PASSAGES OF THE POEM.

And ever as he went he swept a lyre
Of unaccustomed shape, and … strings
Now like the … of impetuous fire,
Which shakes the forest with its murmurings,
Now like the rush of the aereal wings
Of the enamoured wind among the treen,
Whispering unimaginable things,
And dying on the streams of dew serene,
Which feed the unmown meads with ever-during green.

…

And the green Paradise which western waves
Embosom in their ever-wailing sweep,
Talking of freedom to their tongueless caves,

Or to the spirits which within them keep
A record of the wrongs which, though they sleep,
Die not, but dream of retribution, heard
His hymns, and echoing them from steep to steep,
Kept —

…

And then came one of sweet and earnest looks,
Whose soft smiles to his dark and night-like eyes
Were as the clear and ever-living brooks
Are to the obscure fountains whence they rise,
Showing how pure they are: a Paradise
Of happy truth upon his forehead low
Lay, making wisdom lovely, in the guise
Of earth-awakening morn upon the brow
Of star-deserted heaven, while ocean gleams below.

His song, though very sweet, was low and faint,
A simple strain —

…

A mighty Phantasm, half concealed
In darkness of his own exceeding light,
Which clothed his awful presence unrevealed,
Charioted on the … night
Of thunder-smoke, whose skirts were chrysolite.

And like a sudden meteor, which outstrips
The splendour-winged chariot of the sun,
… eclipse
The armies of the golden stars, each one
Pavilioned in its tent of light — all strewn
Over the chasms of blue night —

THE DAEMON OF THE WORLD

A FRAGMENT.

CONTENTS

THE DAEMON OF THE WORLD. PART 1.
THE DAEMON OF THE WORLD. PART 2.

THE DAEMON OF THE WORLD. PART 1.

[Sections 1 and 2 of “Queen Mab” rehandled, and published by Shelley in the “Alastor” volume, 1816. See “Bibliographical List”, and the Editor’s Introductory Note to “Queen Mab”.]

Nec tantum prodere vati,
Quantum scire licet. Venit aetas omnis in unam
Congeriem, miserumque premunt tot saecula pectus.
LUCAN, Phars. v. 176.

How wonderful is Death,
Death and his brother Sleep!
One pale as yonder wan and horned moon,
With lips of lurid blue,
The other glowing like the vital morn,
When throned on ocean’s wave
It breathes over the world:
Yet both so passing strange and wonderful!

Hath then the iron-sceptred Skeleton,
Whose reign is in the tainted sepulchres,
To the hell dogs that couch beneath his throne
Cast that fair prey? Must that divinest form,
Which love and admiration cannot view
Without a beating heart, whose azure veins
Steal like dark streams along a field of snow,
Whose outline is as fair as marble clothed
In light of some sublimest mind, decay?
Nor putrefaction’s breath
Leave aught of this pure spectacle
But loathsomeness and ruin? —
Spare aught but a dark theme,
On which the lightest heart might moralize?
Or is it but that downy-winged slumbers
Have charmed their nurse coy Silence near her lids
To watch their own repose?

Will they, when morning's beam
Flows through those wells of light,
Seek far from noise and day some western cave,
Where woods and streams with soft and pausing winds
A lulling murmur weave? —
Ianthe doth not sleep
The dreamless sleep of death:
Nor in her moonlight chamber silently
Doth Henry hear her regular pulses throb,
Or mark her delicate cheek
With interchange of hues mock the broad moon,
Outwatching weary night,
Without assured reward.
Her dewy eyes are closed;
On their translucent lids, whose texture fine
Scarce hides the dark blue orbs that burn below
With unapparent fire,
The baby Sleep is pillowed:
Her golden tresses shade
The bosom's stainless pride,
Twining like tendrils of the parasite
Around a marble column.

Hark! whence that rushing sound?
'Tis like a wondrous strain that sweeps
Around a lonely ruin
When west winds sigh and evening waves respond
In whispers from the shore:
'Tis wilder than the unmeasured notes
Which from the unseen lyres of dells and groves
The genii of the breezes sweep.
Floating on waves of music and of light,
The chariot of the Daemon of the World
Descends in silent power:
Its shape reposed within: slight as some cloud
That catches but the palest tinge of day
When evening yields to night,

Bright as that fibrous woof when stars indue
Its transitory robe.
Four shapeless shadows bright and beautiful
Draw that strange car of glory, reins of light
Check their unearthly speed; they stop and fold
Their wings of braided air:
The Daemon leaning from the ethereal car
Gazed on the slumbering maid.
Human eye hath ne'er beheld
A shape so wild, so bright, so beautiful,
As that which o'er the maiden's charmed sleep
Waving a starry wand,
Hung like a mist of light.
Such sounds as breathed around like odorous winds
Of wakening spring arose,
Filling the chamber and the moonlight sky.
Maiden, the world's supremest spirit
Beneath the shadow of her wings
Folds all thy memory doth inherit
From ruin of divinest things,
Feelings that lure thee to betray,
And light of thoughts that pass away.
For thou hast earned a mighty boon,
The truths which wisest poets see
Dimly, thy mind may make its own,
Rewarding its own majesty,
Entranced in some diviner mood
Of self-oblivious solitude.

Custom, and Faith, and Power thou spurnest;
From hate and awe thy heart is free;
Ardent and pure as day thou burnest,
For dark and cold mortality
A living light, to cheer it long,
The watch-fires of the world among.

Therefore from nature's inner shrine,
Where gods and fiends in worship bend,
Majestic spirit, be it thine
The flame to seize, the veil to rend,
Where the vast snake Eternity
In charmed sleep doth ever lie.

All that inspires thy voice of love,
Or speaks in thy unclosing eyes,
Or through thy frame doth burn or move,
Or think or feel, awake, arise!
Spirit, leave for mine and me
Earth's unsubstantial mimicry!

It ceased, and from the mute and moveless frame
A radiant spirit arose,
All beautiful in naked purity.
Robed in its human hues it did ascend,
Disparting as it went the silver clouds,
It moved towards the car, and took its seat
Beside the Daemon shape.

Obedient to the sweep of aery song,
The mighty ministers
Unfurled their prismy wings.
The magic car moved on;
The night was fair, innumerable stars
Studded heaven's dark blue vault;
The eastern wave grew pale
With the first smile of morn.
The magic car moved on.
From the swift sweep of wings
The atmosphere in flaming sparkles flew;
And where the burning wheels
Eddied above the mountain's loftiest peak
Was traced a line of lightning.
Now far above a rock the utmost verge

Of the wide earth it flew,
The rival of the Andes, whose dark brow
Frowned o'er the silver sea.
Far, far below the chariot's stormy path,
Calm as a slumbering babe,
Tremendous ocean lay.
Its broad and silent mirror gave to view
The pale and waning stars,
The chariot's fiery track,
And the grey light of morn
Tingeing those fleecy clouds
That cradled in their folds the infant dawn.
The chariot seemed to fly
Through the abyss of an immense concave,
Radiant with million constellations, tinged
With shades of infinite colour,
And semicircled with a belt
Flashing incessant meteors.

As they approached their goal,
The winged shadows seemed to gather speed.
The sea no longer was distinguished; earth
Appeared a vast and shadowy sphere, suspended
In the black concave of heaven
With the sun's cloudless orb,
Whose rays of rapid light
Parted around the chariot's swifter course,
And fell like ocean's feathery spray
Dashed from the boiling surge
Before a vessel's prow.

The magic car moved on.
Earth's distant orb appeared
The smallest light that twinkles in the heavens,
Whilst round the chariot's way
Innumerable systems widely rolled,
And countless spheres diffused

An ever varying glory.
It was a sight of wonder! Some were horned,
And like the moon's argentine crescent hung
In the dark dome of heaven; some did shed
A clear mild beam like Hesperus, while the sea
Yet glows with fading sunlight; others dashed
Athwart the night with trains of bickering fire,
Like sphered worlds to death and ruin driven;
Some shone like stars, and as the chariot passed
Bedimmed all other light.

Spirit of Nature! here
In this interminable wilderness
Of worlds, at whose involved immensity
Even soaring fancy staggers,
Here is thy fitting temple.
Yet not the lightest leaf
That quivers to the passing breeze
Is less instinct with thee, —
Yet not the meanest worm.
That lurks in graves and fattens on the dead,
Less shares thy eternal breath.
Spirit of Nature! thou
Imperishable as this glorious scene,
Here is thy fitting temple.

If solitude hath ever led thy steps
To the shore of the immeasurable sea,
And thou hast lingered there
Until the sun's broad orb
Seemed resting on the fiery line of ocean,
Thou must have marked the braided webs of gold
That without motion hang
Over the sinking sphere:
Thou must have marked the billowy mountain clouds,
Edged with intolerable radiancy,
Towering like rocks of jet

Above the burning deep:
And yet there is a moment
When the sun's highest point
Peers like a star o'er ocean's western edge,
When those far clouds of feathery purple gleam
Like fairy lands girt by some heavenly sea:
Then has thy rapt imagination soared
Where in the midst of all existing things
The temple of the mightiest Daemon stands.

Yet not the golden islands
That gleam amid yon flood of purple light,
Nor the feathery curtains
That canopy the sun's resplendent couch,
Nor the burnished ocean waves
Paving that gorgeous dome,
So fair, so wonderful a sight
As the eternal temple could afford.
The elements of all that human thought
Can frame of lovely or sublime, did join
To rear the fabric of the fane, nor aught
Of earth may image forth its majesty.
Yet likest evening's vault that faery hall,
As heaven low resting on the wave it spread
Its floors of flashing light,
Its vast and azure dome;
And on the verge of that obscure abyss
Where crystal battlements o'erhang the gulf
Of the dark world, ten thousand spheres diffuse
Their lustre through its adamantine gates.

The magic car no longer moved;
The Daemon and the Spirit
Entered the eternal gates.
Those clouds of aery gold
That slept in glittering billows
Beneath the azure canopy,

With the ethereal footsteps trembled not;
While slight and odorous mists
Floated to strains of thrilling melody
Through the vast columns and the pearly shrines.

The Daemon and the Spirit
Approached the overhanging battlement,
Below lay stretched the boundless universe!
There, far as the remotest line
That limits swift imagination's flight.
Unending orbs mingled in mazy motion,
Immutably fulfilling
Eternal Nature's law.
Above, below, around,
The circling systems formed
A wilderness of harmony.
Each with undeviating aim
In eloquent silence through the depths of space
Pursued its wondrous way. —

Awhile the Spirit paused in ecstasy.
Yet soon she saw, as the vast spheres swept by,
Strange things within their belted orbs appear.
Like animated frenzies, dimly moved
Shadows, and skeletons, and fiendly shapes,
Thronging round human graves, and o'er the dead
Sculpturing records for each memory
In verse, such as malignant gods pronounce,
Blasting the hopes of men, when heaven and hell
Confounded burst in ruin o'er the world:
And they did build vast trophies, instruments
Of murder, human bones, barbaric gold,
Skins torn from living men, and towers of skulls
With sightless holes gazing on blinder heaven,
Mitres, and crowns, and brazen chariots stained
With blood, and scrolls of mystic wickedness,
The sanguine codes of venerable crime.

The likeness of a throned king came by.
When these had passed, bearing upon his brow
A threefold crown; his countenance was calm.
His eye severe and cold; but his right hand
Was charged with bloody coin, and he did gnaw
By fits, with secret smiles, a human heart
Concealed beneath his robe; and motley shapes,
A multitudinous throng, around him knelt.
With bosoms bare, and bowed heads, and false looks
Of true submission, as the sphere rolled by.
Brooking no eye to witness their foul shame,
Which human hearts must feel, while human tongues
Tremble to speak, they did rage horribly,
Breathing in self-contempt fierce blasphemies
Against the Daemon of the World, and high
Hurling their armed hands where the pure Spirit,
Serene and inaccessibly secure,
Stood on an isolated pinnacle.
The flood of ages combating below,
The depth of the unbounded universe
Above, and all around
Necessity's unchanging harmony.

THE DAEMON OF THE WORLD. PART 2.

[Sections 8 and 9 of "Queen Mab" rehandled by Shelley. First printed in 1876 by Mr. H. Buxton Forman, C.B., by whose kind permission it is here reproduced. See Editor's Introductory Note to "Queen Mab".]

O happy Earth! reality of Heaven!
To which those restless powers that ceaselessly
Throng through the human universe aspire;
Thou consummation of all mortal hope!
Thou glorious prize of blindly-working will!
Whose rays, diffused throughout all space and time,
Verge to one point and blend for ever there:
Of purest spirits thou pure dwelling-place!
Where care and sorrow, impotence and crime,
Languor, disease, and ignorance dare not come:
O happy Earth, reality of Heaven!

Genius has seen thee in her passionate dreams,
And dim forebodings of thy loveliness,
Haunting the human heart, have there entwined
Those rooted hopes, that the proud Power of Evil
Shall not for ever on this fairest world
Shake pestilence and war, or that his slaves
With blasphemy for prayer, and human blood
For sacrifice, before his shrine for ever
In adoration bend, or Erebus
With all its banded fiends shall not uprise
To overwhelm in envy and revenge
The dauntless and the good, who dare to hurl
Defiance at his throne, girt tho' it be
With Death's omnipotence. Thou hast beheld
His empire, o'er the present and the past;
It was a desolate sight — now gaze on mine,
Futurity. Thou hoary giant Time,
Render thou up thy half-devoured babes, —

And from the cradles of eternity,
Where millions lie lulled to their portioned sleep
By the deep murmuring stream of passing things,
Tear thou that gloomy shroud. — Spirit, behold
Thy glorious destiny!

The Spirit saw
The vast frame of the renovated world
Smile in the lap of Chaos, and the sense
Of hope thro' her fine texture did suffuse
Such varying glow, as summer evening casts
On undulating clouds and deepening lakes.
Like the vague sighings of a wind at even,
That wakes the wavelets of the slumbering sea
And dies on the creation of its breath,
And sinks and rises, fails and swells by fits,
Was the sweet stream of thought that with wild motion
Flowed o'er the Spirit's human sympathies.
The mighty tide of thought had paused awhile,
Which from the Daemon now like Ocean's stream
Again began to pour. —

To me is given
The wonders of the human world to keep-
Space, matter, time and mind — let the sight
Renew and strengthen all thy failing hope.
All things are recreated, and the flame
Of consentaneous love inspires all life:
The fertile bosom of the earth gives suck
To myriads, who still grow beneath her care,
Rewarding her with their pure perfectness:
The balmy breathings of the wind inhale
Her virtues, and diffuse them all abroad:
Health floats amid the gentle atmosphere,
Glows in the fruits, and mantles on the stream;
No storms deform the beaming brow of heaven,
Nor scatter in the freshness of its pride

The foliage of the undecaying trees;
But fruits are ever ripe, flowers ever fair,
And Autumn proudly bears her matron grace,
Kindling a flush on the fair cheek of Spring,
Whose virgin bloom beneath the ruddy fruit
Reflects its tint and blushes into love.

The habitable earth is full of bliss;
Those wastes of frozen billows that were hurled
By everlasting snow-storms round the poles,
Where matter dared not vegetate nor live,
But ceaseless frost round the vast solitude
Bound its broad zone of stillness, are unloosed;
And fragrant zephyrs there from spicy isles
Ruffle the placid ocean-deep, that rolls
Its broad, bright surges to the sloping sand,
Whose roar is wakened into echoings sweet
To murmur through the heaven-breathing groves
And melodise with man's blest nature there.

The vast tract of the parched and sandy waste
Now teems with countless rills and shady woods,
Corn-fields and pastures and white cottages;
And where the startled wilderness did hear
A savage conqueror stained in kindred blood,
Hymmng his victory, or the milder snake
Crushing the bones of some frail antelope
Within his brazen folds — the dewy lawn,
Offering sweet incense to the sunrise, smiles
To see a babe before his mother's door,
Share with the green and golden basilisk
That comes to lick his feet, his morning's meal.

Those trackless deeps, where many a weary sail
Has seen, above the illimitable plain,
Morning on night and night on morning rise,
Whilst still no land to greet the wanderer spread

Its shadowy mountains on the sunbright sea,
Where the loud roarings of the tempest-waves
So long have mingled with the gusty wind
In melancholy loneliness, and swept
The desert of those ocean solitudes,
But vocal to the sea-bird's harrowing shriek,
The bellowing monster, and the rushing storm,
Now to the sweet and many-mingling sounds
Of kindliest human impulses respond:
Those lonely realms bright garden-isles begem,
With lightsome clouds and shining seas between,
And fertile valleys resonant with bliss,
Whilst green woods overcanopy the wave,
Which like a toil-worn labourer leaps to shore,
To meet the kisses of the flowerets there.

Man chief perceives the change, his being notes
The gradual renovation, and defines
Each movement of its progress on his mind.
Man, where the gloom of the long polar night
Lowered o'er the snow-clad rocks and frozen soil,
Where scarce the hardiest herb that braves the frost
Basked in the moonlight's ineffectual glow,
Shrank with the plants, and darkened with the night;
Nor where the tropics bound the realms of day
With a broad belt of mingling cloud and flame,
Where blue mists through the unmoving atmosphere
Scattered the seeds of pestilence, and fed
Unnatural vegetation, where the land
Teemed with all earthquake, tempest and disease,
Was man a nobler being; slavery
Had crushed him to his country's blood-stained dust.

Even where the milder zone afforded man
A seeming shelter, yet contagion there,
Blighting his being with unnumbered ills,
Spread like a quenchless fire; nor truth availed

Till late to arrest its progress, or create
That peace which first in bloodless victory waved
Her snowy standard o'er this favoured clime:
There man was long the train-bearer of slaves,
The mimic of surrounding misery,
The jackal of ambition's lion-rage,
The bloodhound of religion's hungry zeal.

Here now the human being stands adorning
This loveliest earth with taintless body and mind;
Blest from his birth with all bland impulses,
Which gently in his noble bosom wake
All kindly passions and all pure desires.
Him, still from hope to hope the bliss pursuing,
Which from the exhaustless lore of human weal
Dawns on the virtuous mind, the thoughts that rise
In time-destroying infiniteness gift
With self-enshrined eternity, that mocks
The unprevailing hoariness of age,
And man, once fleeting o'er the transient scene
Swift as an unremembered vision, stands
Immortal upon earth: no longer now
He slays the beast that sports around his dwelling
And horribly devours its mangled flesh,
Or drinks its vital blood, which like a stream
Of poison thro' his fevered veins did flow
Feeding a plague that secretly consumed
His feeble frame, and kindling in his mind
Hatred, despair, and fear and vain belief,
The germs of misery, death, disease and crime.
No longer now the winged habitants,
That in the woods their sweet lives sing away,
Flee from the form of man; but gather round,
And prune their sunny feathers on the hands
Which little children stretch in friendly sport
Towards these dreadless partners of their play.
All things are void of terror: man has lost

His desolating privilege, and stands
An equal amidst equals: happiness
And science dawn though late upon the earth;
Peace cheers the mind, health renovates the frame;
Disease and pleasure cease to mingle here,
Reason and passion cease to combat there;
Whilst mind unfettered o'er the earth extends
Its all-subduing energies, and wields
The sceptre of a vast dominion there.

Mild is the slow necessity of death:
The tranquil spirit fails beneath its grasp,
Without a groan, almost without a fear,
Resigned in peace to the necessity,
Calm as a voyager to some distant land,
And full of wonder, full of hope as he.
The deadly germs of languor and disease
Waste in the human frame, and Nature gifts
With choicest boons her human worshippers.
How vigorous now the athletic form of age!
How clear its open and unwrinkled brow!
Where neither avarice, cunning, pride, or care,
Had stamped the seal of grey deformity
On all the mingling lineaments of time.
How lovely the intrepid front of youth!
How sweet the smiles of taintless infancy.

Within the massy prison's mouldering courts,
Fearless and free the ruddy children play,
Weaving gay chaplets for their innocent brows
With the green ivy and the red wall-flower,
That mock the dungeon's unavailing gloom;
The ponderous chains, and gratings of strong iron,
There rust amid the accumulated ruins
Now mingling slowly with their native earth:
There the broad beam of day, which feebly once
Lighted the cheek of lean captivity

With a pale and sickly glare, now freely shines
On the pure smiles of infant playfulness:
No more the shuddering voice of hoarse despair
Peals through the echoing vaults, but soothing notes
Of ivy-fingered winds and gladsome birds
And merriment are resonant around.

The fanes of Fear and Falsehood hear no more
The voice that once waked multitudes to war
Thundering thro' all their aisles: but now respond
To the death dirge of the melancholy wind:
It were a sight of awfulness to see
The works of faith and slavery, so vast,
So sumptuous, yet withal so perishing!
Even as the corpse that rests beneath their wall.
A thousand mourners deck the pomp of death
To-day, the breathing marble glows above
To decorate its memory, and tongues
Are busy of its life: to-morrow, worms
In silence and in darkness seize their prey.
These ruins soon leave not a wreck behind:
Their elements, wide-scattered o'er the globe,
To happier shapes are moulded, and become
Ministrant to all blissful impulses:
Thus human things are perfected, and earth,
Even as a child beneath its mother's love,
Is strengthened in all excellence, and grows
Fairer and nobler with each passing year.

Now Time his dusky pennons o'er the scene
Closes in steadfast darkness, and the past
Fades from our charmed sight. My task is done:
Thy lore is learned. Earth's wonders are thine own,
With all the fear and all the hope they bring.
My spells are past: the present now recurs.
Ah me! a pathless wilderness remains
Yet unsubdued by man's reclaiming hand.

Yet, human Spirit, bravely hold thy course,
Let virtue teach thee firmly to pursue
The gradual paths of an aspiring change:
For birth and life and death, and that strange state
Before the naked powers that thro' the world
Wander like winds have found a human home,
All tend to perfect happiness, and urge
The restless wheels of being on their way,
Whose flashing spokes, instinct with infinite life,
Bicker and burn to gain their destined goal:
For birth but wakes the universal mind
Whose mighty streams might else in silence flow
Thro' the vast world, to individual sense
Of outward shows, whose unexperienced shape
New modes of passion to its frame may lend;
Life is its state of action, and the store
Of all events is aggregated there
That variegate the eternal universe;
Death is a gate of dreariness and gloom,
That leads to azure isles and beaming skies
And happy regions of eternal hope.
Therefore, O Spirit! fearlessly bear on:
Though storms may break the primrose on its stalk,
Though frosts may blight the freshness of its bloom,
Yet spring's awakening breath will woo the earth,
To feed with kindliest dews its favourite flower,
That blooms in mossy banks and darksome glens,
Lighting the green wood with its sunny smile.

Fear not then, Spirit, death's disrobing hand,
So welcome when the tyrant is awake,
So welcome when the bigot's hell-torch flares;
'Tis but the voyage of a darksome hour,
The transient gulf-dream of a startling sleep.
For what thou art shall perish utterly,
But what is thine may never cease to be;
Death is no foe to virtue: earth has seen

Love's brightest roses on the scaffold bloom,
Mingling with freedom's fadeless laurels there,
And presaging the truth of visioned bliss.
Are there not hopes within thee, which this scene
Of linked and gradual being has confirmed?
Hopes that not vainly thou, and living fires
Of mind as radiant and as pure as thou,
Have shone upon the paths of men — return,
Surpassing Spirit, to that world, where thou
Art destined an eternal war to wage
With tyranny and falsehood, and uproot
The germs of misery from the human heart.
Thine is the hand whose piety would soothe
The thorny pillow of unhappy crime,
Whose impotence an easy pardon gains,
Watching its wanderings as a friend's disease:
Thine is the brow whose mildness would defy
Its fiercest rage, and brave its sternest will,
When fenced by power and master of the world.
Thou art sincere and good; of resolute mind,
Free from heart-withering custom's cold control,
Of passion lofty, pure and unsubdued.
Earth's pride and meanness could not vanquish thee,
And therefore art thou worthy of the boon
Which thou hast now received: virtue shall keep
Thy footsteps in the path that thou hast trod,
And many days of beaming hope shall bless
Thy spotless life of sweet and sacred love.
Go, happy one, and give that bosom joy
Whose sleepless spirit waits to catch
Light, life and rapture from thy smile.

The Daemon called its winged ministers.
Speechless with bliss the Spirit mounts the car,
That rolled beside the crystal battlement,
Bending her beamy eyes in thankfulness.
The burning wheels inflame

The steep descent of Heaven's untrodden way.
Fast and far the chariot flew:
The mighty globes that rolled
Around the gate of the Eternal Fane
Lessened by slow degrees, and soon appeared
Such tiny twinklers as the planet orbs
That ministering on the solar power
With borrowed light pursued their narrower way.
Earth floated then below:
The chariot paused a moment;
The Spirit then descended:
And from the earth departing
The shadows with swift wings
Speeded like thought upon the light of Heaven.

The Body and the Soul united then,
A gentle start convulsed Ianthe's frame:
Her veiny eyelids quietly unclosed;
Moveless awhile the dark blue orbs remained:
She looked around in wonder and beheld
Henry, who kneeled in silence by her couch,
Watching her sleep with looks of speechless love,
And the bright beaming stars
That through the casement shone.

PRINCE ATHANASE

A FRAGMENT.

The idea Shelley had formed of *Prince Athanase* was a good deal modelled on "Alastor". In the first sketch of the poem, he named it "Pandemos and Urania". Athanase seeks through the world the One whom he may love. He meets, in the ship in which he is embarked, a lady who appears to him to embody his ideal of love and beauty. But she proves to be Pandemos, or the earthly and unworthy Venus; who, after disappointing his cherished dreams and hopes, deserts him. Athanase, crushed by sorrow, pines and dies. 'On his deathbed, the lady who can really reply to his soul comes and kisses his lips' ("The Deathbed of Athanase"). The poet describes her [in the words of the final fragment, page 164]. This slender note is all we have to aid our imagination in shaping out the form of the poem, such as its author imagined. [Mrs. Shelley's Note.]

Written at Marlow in 1817, towards the close of the year; first published in "Posthumous Poems", 1824. Part 1 is dated by Mrs. Shelley, 'December, 1817,' the remainder, 'Marlow, 1817.' The verses were probably rehandled in Italy during the following year. Sources of the text are (1) "Posthumous Poems", 1824; (2) "Poetical Works" 1839, editions 1st and 2nd; (3) a much-tortured draft amongst the Bodleian manuscripts, collated by Mr. C.D. Locock. For (1) and (2) Mrs. Shelley is responsible. Our text (enlarged by about thirty lines fro the Bodleian manuscript) follows for the most part the "Poetical Works", 1839; verbal exceptions are pointed out in the footnotes. See also the Editor's Notes at the end of this volume, and Mr. Locock's "Examination of Shelley Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library", Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903.

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PRINCE ATHANASE. PART 1.
PRINCE ATHANASE. PART 2.

PRINCE ATHANASE. PART 1.

There was a youth, who, as with toil and travel,
Had grown quite weak and gray before his time;
Nor any could the restless griefs unravel

Which burned within him, withering up his prime
And goading him, like fiends, from land to land.
Not his the load of any secret crime,

For nought of ill his heart could understand,
But pity and wild sorrow for the same; —
Not his the thirst for glory or command,

Baffled with blast of hope-consuming shame;
Nor evil joys which fire the vulgar breast,
And quench in speedy smoke its feeble flame,

Had left within his soul their dark unrest:
Nor what religion fables of the grave
Feared he, — Philosophy's accepted guest.

For none than he a purer heart could have,
Or that loved good more for itself alone;
Of nought in heaven or earth was he the slave.

What sorrow, strange, and shadowy, and unknown,
Sent him, a hopeless wanderer, through mankind? —
If with a human sadness he did groan,

He had a gentle yet aspiring mind;
Just, innocent, with varied learning fed;
And such a glorious consolation find

In others' joy, when all their own is dead:
He loved, and laboured for his kind in grief,
And yet, unlike all others, it is said

That from such toil he never found relief.
Although a child of fortune and of power,
Of an ancestral name the orphan chief,

His soul had wedded Wisdom, and her dower
Is love and justice, clothed in which he sate
Apart from men, as in a lonely tower,

Pitying the tumult of their dark estate. —
Yet even in youth did he not e'er abuse
The strength of wealth or thought, to consecrate

Those false opinions which the harsh rich use
To blind the world they famish for their pride;
Nor did he hold from any man his dues,

But, like a steward in honest dealings tried,
With those who toiled and wept, the poor and wise,
His riches and his cares he did divide.

Fearless he was, and scorning all disguise,
What he dared do or think, though men might start,
He spoke with mild yet unaverted eyes;

Liberal he was of soul, and frank of heart,
And to his many friends — all loved him well —
Whate'er he knew or felt he would impart,

If words he found those inmost thoughts to tell;
If not, he smiled or wept; and his weak foes
He neither spurned nor hated — though with fell

And mortal hate their thousand voices rose,
They passed like aimless arrows from his ear —
Nor did his heart or mind its portal close

To those, or them, or any, whom life's sphere
May comprehend within its wide array.

What sadness made that vernal spirit sere? —

He knew not. Though his life, day after day,
Was failing like an unreplenished stream,
Though in his eyes a cloud and burthen lay,

Through which his soul, like Vesper's serene beam
Piercing the chasms of ever rising clouds,
Shone, softly burning; though his lips did seem

Like reeds which quiver in impetuous floods;
And through his sleep, and o'er each waking hour,
Thoughts after thoughts, unresting multitudes,

Were driven within him by some secret power,
Which bade them blaze, and live, and roll afar,
Like lights and sounds, from haunted tower to tower

O'er castled mountains borne, when tempest's war
Is levied by the night-contending winds,
And the pale dalesmen watch with eager ear; —

Though such were in his spirit, as the fiends
Which wake and feed an everliving woe, —
What was this grief, which ne'er in other minds

A mirror found, — he knew not — none could know;
But on whoe'er might question him he turned
The light of his frank eyes, as if to show

He knew not of the grief within that burned,
But asked forbearance with a mournful look;
Or spoke in words from which none ever learned

The cause of his disquietude; or shook
With spasms of silent passion; or turned pale:
So that his friends soon rarely undertook

To stir his secret pain without avail; —
For all who knew and loved him then perceived
That there was drawn an adamantine veil

Between his heart and mind, — both unrelieved
Wrought in his brain and bosom separate strife.
Some said that he was mad, others believed

That memories of an antenatal life
Made this, where now he dwelt, a penal hell;
And others said that such mysterious grief

From God's displeasure, like a darkness, fell
On souls like his, which owned no higher law
Than love; love calm, steadfast, invincible

By mortal fear or supernatural awe;
And others,—''Tis the shadow of a dream
Which the veiled eye of Memory never saw,

'But through the soul's abyss, like some dark stream
Through shattered mines and caverns underground,
Rolls, shaking its foundations; and no beam

'Of joy may rise, but it is quenched and drowned
In the dim whirlpools of this dream obscure;
Soon its exhausted waters will have found

'A lair of rest beneath thy spirit pure,
O Athanase! — in one so good and great,
Evil or tumult cannot long endure.

So spake they: idly of another's state
Babbling vain words and fond philosophy;
This was their consolation; such debate

Men held with one another; nor did he,
Like one who labours with a human woe,

Decline this talk: as if its theme might be

Another, not himself, he to and fro
Questioned and canvassed it with subtlest wit;
And none but those who loved him best could know

That which he knew not, how it galled and bit
His weary mind, this converse vain and cold;
For like an eyeless nightmare grief did sit

Upon his being; a snake which fold by fold
Pressed out the life of life, a clinging fiend
Which clenched him if he stirred with deadlier hold; —
And so his grief remained — let it remain — untold.

PRINCE ATHANASE. PART 2.

FRAGMENT 1.

Prince Athanase had one beloved friend,
An old, old man, with hair of silver white,
And lips where heavenly smiles would hang and blend

With his wise words; and eyes whose arrowy light
Shone like the reflex of a thousand minds.
He was the last whom superstition's blight

Had spared in Greece — the blight that cramps and blinds, —
And in his olive bower at Oenoe
Had sate from earliest youth. Like one who finds

A fertile island in the barren sea,
One mariner who has survived his mates
Many a drear month in a great ship — so he

With soul-sustaining songs, and sweet debates
Of ancient lore, there fed his lonely being: —
'The mind becomes that which it contemplates,' —

And thus Zonoras, by for ever seeing
Their bright creations, grew like wisest men;
And when he heard the crash of nations fleeing

A bloodier power than ruled thy ruins then,
O sacred Hellas! many weary years
He wandered, till the path of Laian's glen

Was grass-grown — and the unremembered tears
Were dry in Laian for their honoured chief,
Who fell in Byzant, pierced by Moslem spears: —

And as the lady looked with faithful grief
From her high lattice o'er the rugged path,
Where she once saw that horseman toil, with brief

And blighting hope, who with the news of death
Struck body and soul as with a mortal blight,
She saw between the chestnuts, far beneath,

An old man toiling up, a weary wight;
And soon within her hospitable hall
She saw his white hairs glittering in the light

Of the wood fire, and round his shoulders fall;
And his wan visage and his withered mien,
Yet calm and gentle and majestical.

And Athanase, her child, who must have been
Then three years old, sate opposite and gazed
In patient silence.
FRAGMENT 2.

Such was Zonoras; and as daylight finds
One amaranth glittering on the path of frost,
When autumn nights have nipped all weaker kinds,

Thus through his age, dark, cold, and tempest-tossed,
Shone truth upon Zonoras; and he filled
From fountains pure, nigh overgrown and lost,

The spirit of Prince Athanase, a child,
With soul-sustaining songs of ancient lore
And philosophic wisdom, clear and mild.

And sweet and subtle talk they evermore,
The pupil and the master, shared; until,
Sharing that undiminishable store,

The youth, as shadows on a grassy hill
Outrun the winds that chase them, soon outran
His teacher, and did teach with native skill

Strange truths and new to that experienced man;
Still they were friends, as few have ever been
Who mark the extremes of life's discordant span.

So in the caverns of the forest green,
Or on the rocks of echoing ocean hoar,
Zonoras and Prince Athanase were seen

By summer woodmen; and when winter's roar
Sounded o'er earth and sea its blast of war,
The Balearic fisher, driven from shore,

Hanging upon the peaked wave afar,
Then saw their lamp from Laian's turret gleam,
Piercing the stormy darkness, like a star

Which pours beyond the sea one steadfast beam,
Whilst all the constellations of the sky
Seemed reeling through the storm…They did but seem —

For, lo! the wintry clouds are all gone by,
And bright Arcturus through yon pines is glowing,
And far o'er southern waves, immovably

Belted Orion hangs — warm light is flowing
From the young moon into the sunset's chasm. —
'O, summer eve! with power divine, bestowing

'On thine own bird the sweet enthusiasm
Which overflows in notes of liquid gladness,
Filling the sky like light! How many a spasm

'Of fevered brains, oppressed with grief and madness,
Were lulled by thee, delightful nightingale, —

And these soft waves, murmuring a gentle sadness, —

‘And the far sighings of yon piny dale
Made vocal by some wind we feel not here. —
I bear alone what nothing may avail

‘To lighten — a strange load!’ — No human ear
Heard this lament; but o’er the visage wan
Of Athanase, a ruffling atmosphere

Of dark emotion, a swift shadow, ran,
Like wind upon some forest-bosomed lake,
Glassy and dark. — And that divine old man

Beheld his mystic friend’s whole being shake,
Even where its inmost depths were gloomiest —
And with a calm and measured voice he spake,

And, with a soft and equal pressure, pressed
That cold lean hand:—’Dost thou remember yet
When the curved moon then lingering in the west

‘Paused, in yon waves her mighty horns to wet,
How in those beams we walked, half resting on the sea?
‘Tis just one year — sure thou dost not forget —

‘Then Plato’s words of light in thee and me
Lingered like moonlight in the moonless east,
For we had just then read — thy memory

‘Is faithful now — the story of the feast;
And Agathon and Diotima seemed
From death and dark forgetfulness released…’
FRAGMENT 3.

And when the old man saw that on the green
Leaves of his opening … a blight had lighted
He said: ‘My friend, one grief alone can wean

A gentle mind from all that once delighted: —
Thou lovest, and thy secret heart is laden
With feelings which should not be unrequited.’

And Athanase … then smiled, as one o’erladen
With iron chains might smile to talk (?) of bands
Twined round her lover’s neck by some blithe maiden,
And said…
FRAGMENT 4.

‘Twas at the season when the Earth upsprings
From slumber, as a sphered angel’s child,
Shadowing its eyes with green and golden wings,

Stands up before its mother bright and mild,
Of whose soft voice the air expectant seems —
So stood before the sun, which shone and smiled

To see it rise thus joyous from its dreams,
The fresh and radiant Earth. The hoary grove
Waxed green — and flowers burst forth like starry beams; —

The grass in the warm sun did start and move,
And sea-buds burst under the waves serene: —
How many a one, though none be near to love,

Loves then the shade of his own soul, half seen
In any mirror — or the spring’s young minions,
The winged leaves amid the copses green; —

How many a spirit then puts on the pinions
Of fancy, and outstrips the lagging blast,
And his own steps — and over wide dominions

Sweeps in his dream-drawn chariot, far and fast,
More fleet than storms — the wide world shrinks below,
When winter and despondency are past.
FRAGMENT 5.

‘Twas at this season that Prince Athanase
Passed the white Alps — those eagle-baffling mountains
Slept in their shrouds of snow; — beside the ways

The waterfalls were voiceless — for their fountains
Were changed to mines of sunless crystal now,
Or by the curdling winds — like brazen wings

Which clanged along the mountain’s marble brow —
Warped into adamantine fretwork, hung
And filled with frozen light the chasms below.

Vexed by the blast, the great pines groaned and swung
Under their load of [snow] —
…
…
Such as the eagle sees, when he dives down
From the gray deserts of wide air, [beheld]
[Prince] Athanase; and o’er his mien (?) was thrown

The shadow of that scene, field after field,
Purple and dim and wide…
FRAGMENT 6.

Thou art the wine whose drunkenness is all
We can desire, O Love! and happy souls,
Ere from thy vine the leaves of autumn fall,

Catch thee, and feed from their o’erflowing bowls
Thousands who thirst for thine ambrosial dew; —
Thou art the radiance which where ocean rolls

Investeth it; and when the heavens are blue
Thou fillest them; and when the earth is fair
The shadow of thy moving wings imbue

Its deserts and its mountains, till they wear
Beauty like some light robe; — thou ever soarest

Among the towers of men, and as soft air

In spring, which moves the unawakened forest,
Clothing with leaves its branches bare and bleak,
Thou floatest among men; and aye implorest

That which from thee they should implore: — the weak
Alone kneel to thee, offering up the hearts
The strong have broken — yet where shall any seek

A garment whom thou clothest not? the darts
Of the keen winter storm, barbed with frost,
Which, from the everlasting snow that parts

The Alps from Heaven, pierce some traveller lost
In the wide waved interminable snow
Ungarmented,…
ANOTHER FRAGMENT (A)

Yes, often when the eyes are cold and dry,
And the lips calm, the Spirit weeps within
Tears bitterer than the blood of agony

Trembling in drops on the discoloured skin
Of those who love their kind and therefore perish
In ghastly torture — a sweet medicine

Of peace and sleep are tears, and quietly
Them soothe from whose uplifted eyes they fall
But…
ANOTHER FRAGMENT (B)

Her hair was brown, her sphered eyes were brown,
And in their dark and liquid moisture swam,
Like the dim orb of the eclipsed moon;

Yet when the spirit flashed beneath, there came
The light from them, as when tears of delight

Double the western planet’s serene flame.

LETTER TO MARIA GISBORNE

Composed during Shelley's occupation of the Gisbornes' house at Leghorn, July, 1820; published in "Posthumous Poems", 1824. Sources of the text are (1) a draft in Shelley's hand, 'partly illegible' (Forman), amongst the Boscombe manuscripts; (2) a transcript by Mrs. Shelley; (3) the editio princeps, 1824; the text in "Poetical Works", 1839, let and 2nd editions. The text provided here is that of Mrs. Shelley's transcript, modified by the Boscombe manuscript.

LETTER TO MARIA GISBORNE

The spider spreads her webs, whether she be
In poet's tower, cellar, or barn, or tree;
The silk-worm in the dark green mulberry leaves
His winding sheet and cradle ever weaves;
So I, a thing whom moralists call worm,
Sit spinning still round this decaying form,
From the fine threads of rare and subtle thought —
No net of words in garish colours wrought
To catch the idle buzzers of the day —
But a soft cell, where when that fades away,
Memory may clothe in wings my living name
And feed it with the asphodels of fame,
Which in those hearts which must remember me
Grow, making love an immortality.

Whoever should behold me now, I wist,
Would think I were a mighty mechanist,
Bent with sublime Archimedean art
To breathe a soul into the iron heart
Of some machine portentous, or strange gin,
Which by the force of figured spells might win
Its way over the sea, and sport therein;
For round the walls are hung dread engines, such
As Vulcan never wrought for Jove to clutch
Ixion or the Titan: — or the quick
Wit of that man of God, St. Dominic,
To convince Atheist, Turk, or Heretic,
Or those in philanthropic council met,
Who thought to pay some interest for the debt
They owed to Jesus Christ for their salvation,
By giving a faint foretaste of damnation
To Shakespeare, Sidney, Spenser, and the rest
Who made our land an island of the blest,
When lamp-like Spain, who now relumes her fire

On Freedom's hearth, grew dim with Empire: —
With thumbscrews, wheels, with tooth and spike and jag,
Which fishers found under the utmost crag
Of Cornwall and the storm-encompassed isles,
Where to the sky the rude sea rarely smiles
Unless in treacherous wrath, as on the morn
When the exulting elements in scorn,
Satiated with destroyed destruction, lay
Sleeping in beauty on their mangled prey,
As panthers sleep; — and other strange and dread
Magical forms the brick floor overspread, —
Proteus transformed to metal did not make
More figures, or more strange; nor did he take
Such shapes of unintelligible brass,
Or heap himself in such a horrid mass
Of tin and iron not to be understood;
And forms of unimaginable wood,
To puzzle Tubal Cain and all his brood:
Great screws, and cones, and wheels, and grooved blocks,
The elements of what will stand the shocks
Of wave and wind and time. — Upon the table
More knacks and quips there be than I am able
To catalogize in this verse of mine: —
A pretty bowl of wood — not full of wine,
But quicksilver; that dew which the gnomes drink
When at their subterranean toil they swink,
Pledging the demons of the earthquake, who
Reply to them in lava — cry halloo!
And call out to the cities o'er their head, —
Roofs, towers, and shrines, the dying and the dead,
Crash through the chinks of earth — and then all quaff
Another rouse, and hold their sides and laugh.
This quicksilver no gnome has drunk — within
The walnut bowl it lies, veined and thin,
In colour like the wake of light that stains
The Tuscan deep, when from the moist moon rains
The inmost shower of its white fire — the breeze

Is still — blue Heaven smiles over the pale seas.
And in this bowl of quicksilver — for I
Yield to the impulse of an infancy
Outlasting manhood — I have made to float
A rude idealism of a paper boat: —
A hollow screw with cogs — Henry will know
The thing I mean and laugh at me, — if so
He fears not I should do more mischief. — Next
Lie bills and calculations much perplexed,
With steam-boats, frigates, and machinery quaint
Traced over them in blue and yellow paint.
Then comes a range of mathematical
Instruments, for plans nautical and statical,
A heap of rosin, a queer broken glass
With ink in it; — a china cup that was
What it will never be again, I think, —
A thing from which sweet lips were wont to drink
The liquor doctors rail at — and which I
Will quaff in spite of them — and when we die
We'll toss up who died first of drinking tea,
And cry out,—'Heads or tails?' where'er we be.
Near that a dusty paint-box, some odd hooks,
A half-burnt match, an ivory block, three books,
Where conic sections, spherics, logarithms,
To great Laplace, from Saunderson and Sims,
Lie heaped in their harmonious disarray
Of figures, — disentangle them who may.
Baron de Tott's Memoirs beside them lie,
And some odd volumes of old chemistry.
Near those a most inexplicable thing,
With lead in the middle — I'm conjecturing
How to make Henry understand; but no —
I'll leave, as Spenser says, with many mo,
This secret in the pregnant womb of time,
Too vast a matter for so weak a rhyme.

And here like some weird Archimage sit I,
Plotting dark spells, and devilish enginery,
The self-impelling steam-wheels of the mind
Which pump up oaths from clergymen, and grind
The gentle spirit of our meek reviews
Into a powdery foam of salt abuse,
Ruffling the ocean of their self-content; —
I sit — and smile or sigh as is my bent,
But not for them — Libeccio rushes round
With an inconstant and an idle sound,
I heed him more than them — the thunder-smoke
Is gathering on the mountains, like a cloak
Folded athwart their shoulders broad and bare;
The ripe corn under the undulating air
Undulates like an ocean; — and the vines
Are trembling wide in all their trellised lines —
The murmur of the awakening sea doth fill
The empty pauses of the blast; — the hill
Looks hoary through the white electric rain,
And from the glens beyond, in sullen strain,
The interrupted thunder howls; above
One chasm of Heaven smiles, like the eye of Love
On the unquiet world; — while such things are,
How could one worth your friendship heed the war
Of worms? the shriek of the world's carrion jays,
Their censure, or their wonder, or their praise?

You are not here! the quaint witch Memory sees,
In vacant chairs, your absent images,
And points where once you sat, and now should be
But are not. — I demand if ever we
Shall meet as then we met; — and she replies.
Veiling in awe her second-sighted eyes;
'I know the past alone — but summon home
My sister Hope, — she speaks of all to come.'
But I, an old diviner, who knew well
Every false verse of that sweet oracle,

Turned to the sad enchantress once again,
And sought a respite from my gentle pain,
In citing every passage o'er and o'er
Of our communion — how on the sea-shore
We watched the ocean and the sky together,
Under the roof of blue Italian weather;
How I ran home through last year's thunder-storm,
And felt the transverse lightning linger warm
Upon my cheek — and how we often made
Feasts for each other, where good will outweighed
The frugal luxury of our country cheer,
As well it might, were it less firm and clear
Than ours must ever be; — and how we spun
A shroud of talk to hide us from the sun
Of this familiar life, which seems to be
But is not: — or is but quaint mockery
Of all we would believe, and sadly blame
The jarring and inexplicable frame
Of this wrong world: — and then anatomize
The purposes and thoughts of men whose eyes
Were closed in distant years; — or widely guess
The issue of the earth's great business,
When we shall be as we no longer are —
Like babbling gossips safe, who hear the war
Of winds, and sigh, but tremble not; — or how
You listened to some interrupted flow
Of visionary rhyme, — in joy and pain
Struck from the inmost fountains of my brain,
With little skill perhaps; — or how we sought
Those deepest wells of passion or of thought
Wrought by wise poets in the waste of years,
Staining their sacred waters with our tears;
Quenching a thirst ever to be renewed!
Or how I, wisest lady! then endued
The language of a land which now is free,
And, winged with thoughts of truth and majesty,
Flits round the tyrant's sceptre like a cloud,

And bursts the peopled prisons, and cries aloud,
'My name is Legion!' — that majestic tongue
Which Calderon over the desert flung
Of ages and of nations; and which found
An echo in our hearts, and with the sound
Startled oblivion; — thou wert then to me
As is a nurse — when inarticulately
A child would talk as its grown parents do.
If living winds the rapid clouds pursue,
If hawks chase doves through the aethereal way,
Huntsmen the innocent deer, and beasts their prey,
Why should not we rouse with the spirit's blast
Out of the forest of the pathless past
These recollected pleasures?
You are now
In London, that great sea, whose ebb and flow
At once is deaf and loud, and on the shore
Vomits its wrecks, and still howls on for more.
Yet in its depth what treasures! You will see
That which was Godwin, — greater none than he
Though fallen — and fallen on evil times — to stand
Among the spirits of our age and land,
Before the dread tribunal of "to come"
The foremost, — while Rebuke cowers pale and dumb.
You will see Coleridge — he who sits obscure
In the exceeding lustre and the pure
Intense irradiation of a mind,
Which, with its own internal lightning blind,
Flags wearily through darkness and despair —
A cloud-encircled meteor of the air,
A hooded eagle among blinking owls. —
You will see Hunt — one of those happy souls
Which are the salt of the earth, and without whom
This world would smell like what it is — a tomb;
Who is, what others seem; his room no doubt
Is still adorned with many a cast from Shout,
With graceful flowers tastefully placed about;

And coronals of bay from ribbons hung,
And brighter wreaths in neat disorder flung;
The gifts of the most learned among some dozens
Of female friends, sisters-in-law, and cousins.
And there is he with his eternal puns,
Which beat the dullest brain for smiles, like duns
Thundering for money at a poet's door;
Alas! it is no use to say, 'I'm poor!'
Or oft in graver mood, when he will look
Things wiser than were ever read in book,
Except in Shakespeare's wisest tenderness. —
You will see Hogg, — and I cannot express
His virtues, — though I know that they are great,
Because he locks, then barricades the gate
Within which they inhabit; — of his wit
And wisdom, you'll cry out when you are bit.
He is a pearl within an oyster shell.
One of the richest of the deep; — and there
Is English Peacock, with his mountain Fair,
Turned into a Flamingo; — that shy bird
That gleams i' the Indian air — have you not heard
When a man marries, dies, or turns Hindoo,
His best friends hear no more of him? — but you
Will see him, and will like him too, I hope,
With the milk-white Snowdonian Antelope
Matched with this cameleopard — his fine wit
Makes such a wound, the knife is lost in it;
A strain too learned for a shallow age,
Too wise for selfish bigots; let his page,
Which charms the chosen spirits of the time,
Fold itself up for the serener clime
Of years to come, and find its recompense
In that just expectation. — Wit and sense,
Virtue and human knowledge; all that might
Make this dull world a business of delight,
Are all combined in Horace Smith. — And these.
With some exceptions, which I need not tease

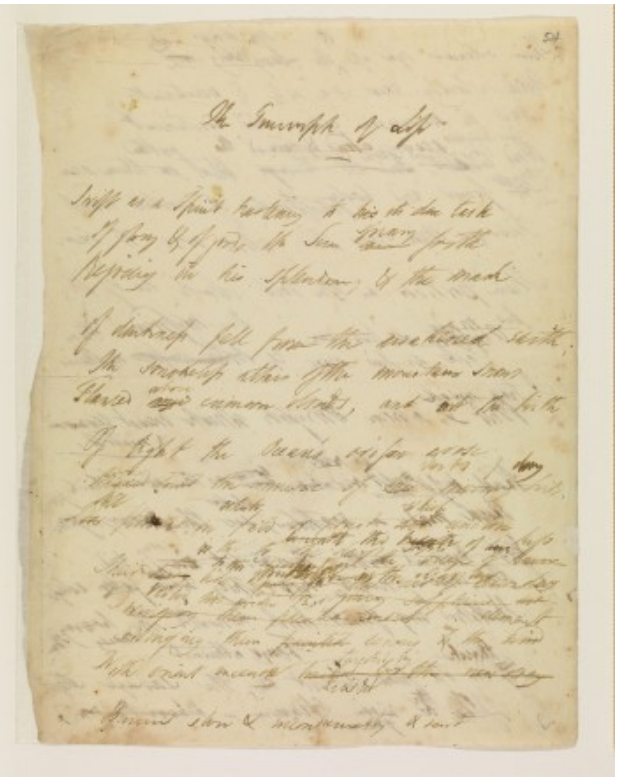
Your patience by descanting on, — are all
You and I know in London.
I recall
My thoughts, and bid you look upon the night.
As water does a sponge, so the moonlight
Fills the void, hollow, universal air —
What see you? — unpavilioned Heaven is fair,
Whether the moon, into her chamber gone,
Leaves midnight to the golden stars, or wan
Climbs with diminished beams the azure steep;
Or whether clouds sail o'er the inverse deep,
Piloted by the many-wandering blast,
And the rare stars rush through them dim and fast: —
All this is beautiful in every land. —
But what see you beside? — a shabby stand
Of Hackney coaches — a brick house or wall
Fencing some lonely court, white with the scrawl
Of our unhappy politics; — or worse —
A wretched woman reeling by, whose curse
Mixed with the watchman's, partner of her trade,
You must accept in place of serenade —
Or yellow-haired Pollonia murmuring
To Henry, some unutterable thing.
I see a chaos of green leaves and fruit
Built round dark caverns, even to the root
Of the living stems that feed them — in whose bowers
There sleep in their dark dew the folded flowers;
Beyond, the surface of the unsickled corn
Trembles not in the slumbering air, and borne
In circles quaint, and ever-changing dance,
Like winged stars the fire-flies flash and glance,
Pale in the open moonshine, but each one
Under the dark trees seems a little sun,
A meteor tamed; a fixed star gone astray
From the silver regions of the milky way; —
Afar the Contadino's song is heard,
Rude, but made sweet by distance — and a bird

Which cannot be the Nightingale, and yet
I know none else that sings so sweet as it
At this late hour; — and then all is still —
Now — Italy or London, which you will!

Next winter you must pass with me; I'll have
My house by that time turned into a grave
Of dead despondence and low-thoughted care,
And all the dreams which our tormentors are;
Oh! that Hunt, Hogg, Peacock, and Smith were there,
With everything belonging to them fair! —
We will have books, Spanish, Italian, Greek;
And ask one week to make another week
As like his father, as I'm unlike mine,
Which is not his fault, as you may divine.
Though we eat little flesh and drink no wine,
Yet let's be merry: we'll have tea and toast;
Custards for supper, and an endless host
Of syllabubs and jellies and mince-pies,
And other such lady-like luxuries, —
Feasting on which we will philosophize!
And we'll have fires out of the Grand Duke's wood,
To thaw the six weeks' winter in our blood.
And then we'll talk; — what shall we talk about?
Oh! there are themes enough for many a bout
Of thought-entangled descant; — as to nerves —
With cones and parallelograms and curves
I've sworn to strangle them if once they dare
To bother me — when you are with me there.
And they shall never more sip laudanum,
From Helicon or Himeros (1); — well, come,
And in despite of God and of the devil,
We'll make our friendly philosophic revel
Outlast the leafless time; till buds and flowers
Warn the obscure inevitable hours,
Sweet meeting by sad parting to renew; —
'To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new.'

THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE

This poem was the last major work by Shelley before his death in 1822. Shelley wrote the poem at Casa Magni in Lerici, Italy, modelling it on Petrarch's *Trionfi* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*. *The Triumph of Love* was first published in the collection *Posthumous Poems* (1824) published in London by John and Henry L. Hunt which was edited by the poet's wife Mary Shelley, who had stressed the importance of the work. The theme of the poem is an exploration of the nature of being and reality. Shelley portrays life as a "painted veil" that obscures and disguises the immortal spirit and the poem explains how natural life corrupts and triumphs over the spirit. Sadly, the poem was left unifinished, with the poet dying in a storm on a boat voyage near Leghorn.



The surviving manuscript of the first page

THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE.

Swift as a spirit hastening to his task
Of glory and of good, the Sun sprang forth
Rejoicing in his splendour, and the mask

Of darkness fell from the awakened Earth —
The smokeless altars of the mountain snows
Flamed above crimson clouds, and at the birth

Of light, the Ocean's orison arose,
To which the birds tempered their matin lay.
All flowers in field or forest which unclose

Their trembling eyelids to the kiss of day,
Swinging their censers in the element,
With orient incense lit by the new ray

Burned slow and inconsumably, and sent
Their odorous sighs up to the smiling air;
And, in succession due, did continent,

Isle, ocean, and all things that in them wear
The form and character of mortal mould,
Rise as the Sun their father rose, to bear

Their portion of the toil, which he of old
Took as his own, and then imposed on them:
But I, whom thoughts which must remain untold

Had kept as wakeful as the stars that gem
The cone of night, now they were laid asleep
Stretched my faint limbs beneath the hoary stem

Which an old chestnut flung athwart the steep
Of a green Apennine: before me fled
The night; behind me rose the day; the deep

Was at my feet, and Heaven above my head, —
When a strange trance over my fancy grew
Which was not slumber, for the shade it spread

Was so transparent, that the scene came through
As clear as when a veil of light is drawn
O'er evening hills they glimmer; and I knew

That I had felt the freshness of that dawn
Bathe in the same cold dew my brow and hair,
And sate as thus upon that slope of lawn

Under the self-same bough, and heard as there
The birds, the fountains and the ocean hold
Sweet talk in music through the enamoured air,
And then a vision on my train was rolled.

…

As in that trance of wondrous thought I lay,
This was the tenour of my waking dream: —
Methought I sate beside a public way

Thick strewn with summer dust, and a great stream
Of people there was hurrying to and fro,
Numerous as gnats upon the evening gleam,

All hastening onward, yet none seemed to know
Whither he went, or whence he came, or why
He made one of the multitude, and so

Was borne amid the crowd, as through the sky
One of the million leaves of summer's bier;
Old age and youth, manhood and infancy,

Mixed in one mighty torrent did appear,
Some flying from the thing they feared, and some
Seeking the object of another's fear;

And others, as with steps towards the tomb,
Pored on the trodden worms that crawled beneath,
And others mournfully within the gloom

Of their own shadow walked, and called it death;
And some fled from it as it were a ghost,
Half fainting in the affliction of vain breath:

But more, with motions which each other crossed,
Pursued or shunned the shadows the clouds threw,
Or birds within the noonday aether lost,

Upon that path where flowers never grew, —
And, weary with vain toil and faint for thirst,
Heard not the fountains, whose melodious dew

Out of their mossy cells forever burst;
Nor felt the breeze which from the forest told
Of grassy paths and wood-lawns interspersed

With overarching elms and caverns cold,
And violet banks where sweet dreams brood, but they
Pursued their serious folly as of old.

And as I gazed, methought that in the way
The throng grew wilder, as the woods of June
When the south wind shakes the extinguished day,

And a cold glare, intenser than the noon,
But icy cold, obscured with blinding light
The sun, as he the stars. Like the young moon —

When on the sunlit limits of the night
Her white shell trembles amid crimson air,
And whilst the sleeping tempest gathers might —

Doth, as the herald of its coming, bear
The ghost of its dead mother, whose dim form

Bends in dark aether from her infant's chair, —

So came a chariot on the silent storm
Of its own rushing splendour, and a Shape
So sate within, as one whom years deform,

Beneath a dusky hood and double cape,
Crouching within the shadow of a tomb;
And o'er what seemed the head a cloud-like crape

Was bent, a dun and faint aethereal gloom
Tempering the light. Upon the chariot-beam
A Janus-visaged Shadow did assume

The guidance of that wonder-winged team;
The shapes which drew it in thick lightenings
Were lost: — I heard alone on the air's soft stream

The music of their ever-moving wings.
All the four faces of that Charioteer
Had their eyes banded; little profit brings

Speed in the van and blindness in the rear,
Nor then avail the beams that quench the sun, —
Or that with banded eyes could pierce the sphere

Of all that is, has been or will be done;
So ill was the car guided — but it passed
With solemn speed majestically on.

The crowd gave way, and I arose aghast,
Or seemed to rise, so mighty was the trance,
And saw, like clouds upon the thunder-blast,

The million with fierce song and maniac dance
Raging around — such seemed the jubilee
As when to greet some conqueror's advance

Imperial Rome poured forth her living sea
From senate-house, and forum, and theatre,
When … upon the free

Had bound a yoke, which soon they stooped to bear.
Nor wanted here the just similitude
Of a triumphal pageant, for where'er

The chariot rolled, a captive multitude
Was driven; — all those who had grown old in power
Or misery, — all who had their age subdued

By action or by suffering, and whose hour
Was drained to its last sand in weal or woe,
So that the trunk survived both fruit and flower; —

All those whose fame or infamy must grow
Till the great winter lay the form and name
Of this green earth with them for ever low; —

All but the sacred few who could not tame
Their spirits to the conquerors — but as soon
As they had touched the world with living flame,

Fled back like eagles to their native noon,
Or those who put aside the diadem
Of earthly thrones or gems…

Were there, of Athens or Jerusalem.
Were neither mid the mighty captives seen,
Nor mid the ribald crowd that followed them,

Nor those who went before fierce and obscene.
The wild dance maddens in the van, and those
Who lead it — fleet as shadows on the green,

Outspeed the chariot, and without repose
Mix with each other in tempestuous measure

To savage music, wilder as it grows,

They, tortured by their agonizing pleasure,
Convulsed and on the rapid whirlwinds spun
Of that fierce Spirit, whose unholy leisure

Was soothed by mischief since the world begun,
Throw back their heads and loose their streaming hair;
And in their dance round her who dims the sun,

Maidens and youths fling their wild arms in air
As their feet twinkle; they recede, and now
Bending within each other's atmosphere,

Kindle invisibly — and as they glow,
Like moths by light attracted and repelled,
Oft to their bright destruction come and go,

Till like two clouds into one vale impelled,
That shake the mountains when their lightnings mingle
And die in rain — the fiery band which held

Their natures, snaps — while the shock still may tingle
One falls and then another in the path
Senseless — nor is the desolation single,

Yet ere I can say WHERE — the chariot hath
Passed over them — nor other trace I find
But as of foam after the ocean's wrath

Is spent upon the desert shore; — behind,
Old men and women foully disarrayed,
Shake their gray hairs in the insulting wind,

And follow in the dance, with limbs decayed,
Seeking to reach the light which leaves them still
Farther behind and deeper in the shade.

But not the less with impotence of will
They wheel, though ghastly shadows interpose
Round them and round each other, and fulfil

Their work, and in the dust from whence they rose
Sink, and corruption veils them as they lie,
And past in these performs what … in those.

Struck to the heart by this sad pageantry,
Half to myself I said—'And what is this?
Whose shape is that within the car? And why—'

I would have added—'is all here amiss?—'
But a voice answered—'Life!' — I turned, and knew
(O Heaven, have mercy on such wretchedness!)

That what I thought was an old root which grew
To strange distortion out of the hill side,
Was indeed one of those deluded crew,

And that the grass, which methought hung so wide
And white, was but his thin discoloured hair,
And that the holes he vainly sought to hide,

Were or had been eyes:—'If thou canst forbear
To join the dance, which I had well forborne,'
Said the grim Feature, of my thought aware,

'I will unfold that which to this deep scorn
Led me and my companions, and relate
The progress of the pageant since the morn;

'If thirst of knowledge shall not then abate,
Follow it thou even to the night, but I
Am weary.' — Then like one who with the weight

Of his own words is staggered, wearily
He paused; and ere he could resume, I cried:

‘First, who art thou?’—’Before thy memory,

‘I feared, loved, hated, suffered, did and died,
And if the spark with which Heaven lit my spirit
Had been with purer nutriment supplied,

‘Corruption would not now thus much inherit
Of what was once Rousseau, — nor this disguise
Stain that which ought to have disdained to wear it;

‘If I have been extinguished, yet there rise
A thousand beacons from the spark I bore’ —
‘And who are those chained to the car?’—’The wise,

‘The great, the unforgotten, — they who wore
Mitres and helms and crowns, or wreaths of light,
Signs of thought’s empire over thought — their lore

‘Taught them not this, to know themselves; their might
Could not repress the mystery within,
And for the morn of truth they feigned, deep night

‘Caught them ere evening.’—’Who is he with chin
Upon his breast, and hands crossed on his chain?’ —
‘The child of a fierce hour; he sought to win

‘The world, and lost all that it did contain
Of greatness, in its hope destroyed; and more
Of fame and peace than virtue’s self can gain

‘Without the opportunity which bore
Him on its eagle pinions to the peak
From which a thousand climbers have before

‘Fallen, as Napoleon fell.’ — I felt my cheek
Alter, to see the shadow pass away,
Whose grasp had left the giant world so weak

That every pigmy kicked it as it lay;
And much I grieved to think how power and will
In opposition rule our mortal day,

And why God made irreconcilable
Good and the means of good; and for despair
I half disdained mine eyes' desire to fill

With the spent vision of the times that were
And scarce have ceased to be.—'Dost thou behold,'
Said my guide, 'those spoilers spoiled, Voltaire,

'Frederick, and Paul, Catherine, and Leopold, And hoary anarchs, demagogues, and sage — names which the world thinks always old,

'For in the battle Life and they did wage,
She remained conqueror. I was overcome
By my own heart alone, which neither age,

'Nor tears, nor infamy, nor now the tomb
Could temper to its object.'—'Let them pass,'
I cried, 'the world and its mysterious doom

'Is not so much more glorious than it was,
That I desire to worship those who drew
New figures on its false and fragile glass

'As the old faded.'—'Figures ever new
Rise on the bubble, paint them as you may;
We have but thrown, as those before us threw,

'Our shadows on it as it passed away.
But mark how chained to the triumphal chair
The mighty phantoms of an elder day;

'All that is mortal of great Plato there
Expiates the joy and woe his master knew not;
The star that ruled his doom was far too fair.

‘And life, where long that flower of Heaven grew not,
Conquered that heart by love, which gold, or pain,
Or age, or sloth, or slavery could subdue not.

‘And near him walk the … twain,
The tutor and his pupil, whom Dominion
Followed as tame as vulture in a chain.

‘The world was darkened beneath either pinion
Of him whom from the flock of conquerors
Fame singled out for her thunder-bearing minion;

‘The other long outlived both woes and wars,
Throned in the thoughts of men, and still had kept
The jealous key of Truth’s eternal doors,

‘If Bacon’s eagle spirit had not lept
Like lightning out of darkness — he compelled
The Proteus shape of Nature, as it slept

‘To wake, and lead him to the caves that held
The treasure of the secrets of its reign.
See the great bards of elder time, who quelled

‘The passions which they sung, as by their strain
May well be known: their living melody
Tempers its own contagion to the vein

‘Of those who are infected with it — I
Have suffered what I wrote, or viler pain!
And so my words have seeds of misery —

‘Even as the deeds of others, not as theirs.’
And then he pointed to a company,

‘Midst whom I quickly recognized the heirs
Of Caesar’s crime, from him to Constantine;
The anarch chiefs, whose force and murderous snares

Had founded many a sceptre-bearing line,
And spread the plague of gold and blood abroad:
And Gregory and John, and men divine,

Who rose like shadows between man and God;
Till that eclipse, still hanging over heaven,
Was worshipped by the world o'er which they strode,

For the true sun it quenched—'Their power was given
But to destroy,' replied the leader:—'I
Am one of those who have created, even

'If it be but a world of agony.' —
'Whence camest thou? and whither goest thou?
How did thy course begin?' I said, 'and why?

'Mine eyes are sick of this perpetual flow
Of people, and my heart sick of one sad thought —
Speak!'—'Whence I am, I partly seem to know,

'And how and by what paths I have been brought
To this dread pass, methinks even thou mayst guess; —
Why this should be, my mind can compass not;

'Whither the conqueror hurries me, still less; —
But follow thou, and from spectator turn
Actor or victim in this wretchedness,

'And what thou wouldst be taught I then may learn
From thee. Now listen: — In the April prime,
When all the forest-tips began to burn

'With kindling green, touched by the azure clime
Of the young season, I was laid asleep
Under a mountain, which from unknown time

'Had yawned into a cavern, high and deep;
And from it came a gentle rivulet,

Whose water, like clear air, in its calm sweep

‘Bent the soft grass, and kept for ever wet
The stems of the sweet flowers, and filled the grove
With sounds, which whoso hears must needs forget

‘All pleasure and all pain, all hate and love,
Which they had known before that hour of rest;
A sleeping mother then would dream not of

‘Her only child who died upon the breast
At eventide — a king would mourn no more
The crown of which his brows were dispossessed

‘When the sun lingered o’er his ocean floor
To gild his rival’s new prosperity.
‘Thou wouldst forget thus vainly to deplore

‘Ills, which if ills can find no cure from thee,
The thought of which no other sleep will quell,
Nor other music blot from memory,

‘So sweet and deep is the oblivious spell;
And whether life had been before that sleep
The Heaven which I imagine, or a Hell

‘Like this harsh world in which I woke to weep,
I know not. I arose, and for a space
The scene of woods and waters seemed to keep,

Though it was now broad day, a gentle trace
Of light diviner than the common sun
Sheds on the common earth, and all the place

‘Was filled with magic sounds woven into one
Oblivious melody, confusing sense
Amid the gliding waves and shadows dun;

‘And, as I looked, the bright omnipresence
Of morning through the orient cavern flowed,
And the sun’s image radiantly intense

‘Burned on the waters of the well that glowed
Like gold, and threaded all the forest’s maze
With winding paths of emerald fire; there stood

‘Amid the sun, as he amid the blaze
Of his own glory, on the vibrating
Floor of the fountain, paved with flashing rays,

‘A Shape all light, which with one hand did fling
Dew on the earth, as if she were the dawn,
And the invisible rain did ever sing

‘A silver music on the mossy lawn;
And still before me on the dusky grass,
Iris her many-coloured scarf had drawn:

‘In her right hand she bore a crystal glass,
Mantling with bright Nepenthe; the fierce splendour
Fell from her as she moved under the mass

‘Of the deep cavern, and with palms so tender,
Their tread broke not the mirror of its billow,
Glided along the river, and did bend her

‘Head under the dark boughs, till like a willow
Her fair hair swept the bosom of the stream
That whispered with delight to be its pillow.

‘As one enamoured is upborne in dream
O’er lily-paven lakes, mid silver mist
To wondrous music, so this shape might seem

‘Partly to tread the waves with feet which kissed
The dancing foam; partly to glide along

The air which roughened the moist amethyst,

‘Or the faint morning beams that fell among
The trees, or the soft shadows of the trees;
And her feet, ever to the ceaseless song

‘Of leaves, and winds, and waves, and birds, and bees,
And falling drops, moved in a measure new
Yet sweet, as on the summer evening breeze,

‘Up from the lake a shape of golden dew
Between two rocks, athwart the rising moon,
Dances i’ the wind, where never eagle flew;

‘And still her feet, no less than the sweet tune
To which they moved, seemed as they moved to blot
The thoughts of him who gazed on them; and soon

‘All that was, seemed as if it had been not;
And all the gazer’s mind was strewn beneath
Her feet like embers; and she, thought by thought,

‘Trampled its sparks into the dust of death
As day upon the threshold of the east
Treads out the lamps of night, until the breath

‘Of darkness re-illumine even the least
Of heaven’s living eyes — like day she came,
Making the night a dream; and ere she ceased

‘To move, as one between desire and shame
Suspended, I said — If, as it doth seem,
Thou comest from the realm without a name

‘Into this valley of perpetual dream,
Show whence I came, and where I am, and why —
Pass not away upon the passing stream.

‘Arise and quench thy thirst, was her reply.
And as a shut lily stricken by the wand
Of dewy morning’s vital alchemy,

‘I rose; and, bending at her sweet command,
Touched with faint lips the cup she raised,
And suddenly my brain became as sand

‘Where the first wave had more than half erased
The track of deer on desert Labrador;
Whilst the wolf, from which they fled amazed,

‘Leaves his stamp visibly upon the shore,
Until the second bursts; — so on my sight
Burst a new vision, never seen before,

‘And the fair shape waned in the coming light,
As veil by veil the silent splendour drops
From Lucifer, amid the chrysolite

‘Of sunrise, ere it tinge the mountain-tops;
And as the presence of that fairest planet,
Although unseen, is felt by one who hopes

‘That his day’s path may end as he began it,
In that star’s smile, whose light is like the scent
Of a jonquil when evening breezes fan it,

‘Or the soft note in which his dear lament
The Brescian shepherd breathes, or the caress
That turned his weary slumber to content;

‘So knew I in that light’s severe excess
The presence of that Shape which on the stream
Moved, as I moved along the wilderness,

‘More dimly than a day-appearing dream,
The host of a forgotten form of sleep;

A light of heaven, whose half-extinguished beam

‘Through the sick day in which we wake to weep
Glimmers, for ever sought, for ever lost;
So did that shape its obscure tenour keep

‘Beside my path, as silent as a ghost;
But the new Vision, and the cold bright car,
With solemn speed and stunning music, crossed

‘The forest, and as if from some dread war
Triumphantly returning, the loud million
Fiercely extolled the fortune of her star.

‘A moving arch of victory, the vermilion
And green and azure plumes of Iris had
Built high over her wind-winged pavilion,

‘And underneath aethereal glory clad
The wilderness, and far before her flew
The tempest of the splendour, which forbade

‘Shadow to fall from leaf and stone; the crew
Seemed in that light, like atomies to dance
Within a sunbeam; — some upon the new

‘Embroidery of flowers, that did enhance
The grassy vesture of the desert, played,
Forgetful of the chariot’s swift advance;

‘Others stood gazing, till within the shade
Of the great mountain its light left them dim;
Others outspeeded it; and others made

‘Circles around it, like the clouds that swim
Round the high moon in a bright sea of air;
And more did follow, with exulting hymn,

‘The chariot and the captives fettered there: —
But all like bubbles on an eddying flood
Fell into the same track at last, and were

‘Borne onward. — I among the multitude
Was swept — me, sweetest flowers delayed not long;
Me, not the shadow nor the solitude;

‘Me, not that falling stream’s Lethean song;
Me, not the phantom of that early Form
Which moved upon its motion — but among

‘The thickest billows of that living storm
I plunged, and bared my bosom to the clime
Of that cold light, whose airs too soon deform.

‘Before the chariot had begun to climb
The opposing steep of that mysterious dell,
Behold a wonder worthy of the rhyme

‘Of him who from the lowest depths of hell,
Through every paradise and through all glory,
Love led serene, and who returned to tell

‘The words of hate and awe; the wondrous story
How all things are transfigured except Love;
For deaf as is a sea, which wrath makes hoary,

‘The world can hear not the sweet notes that move
The sphere whose light is melody to lovers —
A wonder worthy of his rhyme. — The grove

‘Grew dense with shadows to its inmost covers,
The earth was gray with phantoms, and the air
Was peopled with dim forms, as when there hovers

‘A flock of vampire-bats before the glare
Of the tropic sun, bringing, ere evening,

Strange night upon some Indian isle; — thus were

‘Phantoms diffused around; and some did fling
Shadows of shadows, yet unlike themselves,
Behind them; some like eaglets on the wing

‘Were lost in the white day; others like elves
Danced in a thousand unimagined shapes
Upon the sunny streams and grassy shelves;

‘And others sate chattering like restless apes
On vulgar hands,…
Some made a cradle of the ermined capes

‘Of kingly mantles; some across the tiar
Of pontiffs sate like vultures; others played
Under the crown which girt with empire

‘A baby’s or an idiot’s brow, and made
Their nests in it. The old anatomies
Sate hatching their bare broods under the shade

‘Of daemon wings, and laughed from their dead eyes
To reassume the delegated power,
Arrayed in which those worms did monarchize,

‘Who made this earth their charnel. Others more
Humble, like falcons, sate upon the fist
Of common men, and round their heads did soar;

Or like small gnats and flies, as thick as mist
On evening marshes, thronged about the brow
Of lawyers, statesmen, priest and theorist; —

‘And others, like discoloured flakes of snow
On fairest bosoms and the sunniest hair,
Fell, and were melted by the youthful glow

‘Which they extinguished; and, like tears, they were
A veil to those from whose faint lids they rained
In drops of sorrow. I became aware

‘Of whence those forms proceeded which thus stained
The track in which we moved. After brief space,
From every form the beauty slowly waned;

‘From every firmest limb and fairest face
The strength and freshness fell like dust, and left
The action and the shape without the grace

‘Of life. The marble brow of youth was cleft
With care; and in those eyes where once hope shone,
Desire, like a lioness bereft

‘Of her last cub, glared ere it died; each one
Of that great crowd sent forth incessantly
These shadows, numerous as the dead leaves blown

‘In autumn evening from a poplar tree.
Each like himself and like each other were
At first; but some distorted seemed to be

‘Obscure clouds, moulded by the casual air;
And of this stuff the car’s creative ray
Wrought all the busy phantoms that were there,

‘As the sun shapes the clouds; thus on the way
Mask after mask fell from the countenance
And form of all; and long before the day

‘Was old, the joy which waked like heaven’s glance
The sleepers in the oblivious valley, died;
And some grew weary of the ghastly dance,

‘And fell, as I have fallen, by the wayside; —
Those soonest from whose forms most shadows passed,

And least of strength and beauty did abide.

‘Then, what is life? I cried.’ —

CANCELLED OPENING OF THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE.

[Published by Miss M. Blind, “Westminster Review”, July, 1870.]

Out of the eastern shadow of the Earth,
Amid the clouds upon its margin gray
Scattered by Night to swathe in its bright birth

In gold and fleecy snow the infant Day,
The glorious Sun arose: beneath his light,
The earth and all…

TRANSLATIONS

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HYMN TO MERCURY.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK OF HOMER.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824. This alone of the "Translations" is included in the Harvard manuscript book. 'Fragments of the drafts of this and the other Hymns of Homer exist among the Boscombe manuscripts' (Forman).)

1.
Sing, Muse, the son of Maia and of Jove,
The Herald-child, king of Arcadia
And all its pastoral hills, whom in sweet love
Having been interwoven, modest May
Bore Heaven's dread Supreme. An antique grove
Shadowed the cavern where the lovers lay
In the deep night, unseen by Gods or Men,
And white-armed Juno slumbered sweetly then.

2.
Now, when the joy of Jove had its fulfilling,
And Heaven's tenth moon chronicled her relief,
She gave to light a babe all babes excelling,
A schemer subtle beyond all belief;
A shepherd of thin dreams, a cow-stealing,
A night-watching, and door-waylaying thief,
Who 'mongst the Gods was soon about to thieve,
And other glorious actions to achieve.

3.
The babe was born at the first peep of day;
He began playing on the lyre at noon,
And the same evening did he steal away
Apollo's herds; — the fourth day of the moon
On which him bore the venerable May,
From her immortal limbs he leaped full soon,

Nor long could in the sacred cradle keep,
But out to seek Apollo's herds would creep.

4.
Out of the lofty cavern wandering
He found a tortoise, and cried out—'A treasure!'
(For Mercury first made the tortoise sing)
The beast before the portal at his leisure
The flowery herbage was depasturing,
Moving his feet in a deliberate measure
Over the turf. Jove's profitable son
Eying him laughed, and laughing thus begun: —

5.
'A useful godsend are you to me now,
King of the dance, companion of the feast,
Lovely in all your nature! Welcome, you
Excellent plaything! Where, sweet mountain-beast,
Got you that speckled shell? Thus much I know,
You must come home with me and be my guest;
You will give joy to me, and I will do
All that is in my power to honour you.

6.
'Better to be at home than out of door,
So come with me; and though it has been said
That you alive defend from magic power,
I know you will sing sweetly when you're dead.'
Thus having spoken, the quaint infant bore,
Lifting it from the grass on which it fed
And grasping it in his delighted hold,
His treasured prize into the cavern old.

7.
Then scooping with a chisel of gray steel,
He bored the life and soul out of the beast. —
Not swifter a swift thought of woe or weal
Darts through the tumult of a human breast

Which thronging cares annoy — not swifter wheel
The flashes of its torture and unrest
Out of the dizzy eyes — than Maia's son
All that he did devise hath featly done.

8.

…

And through the tortoise's hard stony skin
At proper distances small holes he made,
And fastened the cut stems of reeds within,
And with a piece of leather overlaid
The open space and fixed the cubits in,
Fitting the bridge to both, and stretched o'er all
Symphonious cords of sheep-gut rhythmical.

9.

When he had wrought the lovely instrument,
He tried the chords, and made division meet,
Preluding with the plectrum, and there went
Up from beneath his hand a tumult sweet
Of mighty sounds, and from his lips he sent
A strain of unpremeditated wit
Joyous and wild and wanton — such you may
Hear among revellers on a holiday.

10.

He sung how Jove and May of the bright sandal
Dallied in love not quite legitimate;
And his own birth, still scoffing at the scandal,
And naming his own name, did celebrate;
His mother's cave and servant maids he planned all
In plastic verse, her household stuff and state,
Perennial pot, trippet, and brazen pan, —
But singing, he conceived another plan.

11.

…

Seized with a sudden fancy for fresh meat,

He in his sacred crib deposited
The hollow lyre, and from the cavern sweet
Rushed with great leaps up to the mountain's head,
Revolving in his mind some subtle feat
Of thievish craft, such as a swindler might
Devise in the lone season of dun night.

12.
Lo! the great Sun under the ocean's bed has
Driven steeds and chariot — the child meanwhile strode
O'er the Pierian mountains clothed in shadows,
Where the immortal oxen of the God
Are pastured in the flowering unmown meadows,
And safely stalled in a remote abode. —
The archer Argicide, elate and proud,
Drove fifty from the herd, lowing aloud.

13.
He drove them wandering o'er the sandy way,
But, being ever mindful of his craft,
Backward and forward drove he them astray,
So that the tracks which seemed before, were aft;
His sandals then he threw to the ocean spray,
And for each foot he wrought a kind of raft
Of tamarisk, and tamarisk-like sprigs,
And bound them in a lump with withy twigs.

14.
And on his feet he tied these sandals light,
The trail of whose wide leaves might not betray
His track; and then, a self-sufficing wight,
Like a man hastening on some distant way,
He from Pieria's mountain bent his flight;
But an old man perceived the infant pass
Down green Onchestus heaped like beds with grass.

15.
The old man stood dressing his sunny vine:

‘Halloo! old fellow with the crooked shoulder!
You grub those stumps? before they will bear wine
Methinks even you must grow a little older:
Attend, I pray, to this advice of mine,
As you would ‘scape what might appal a bolder —
Seeing, see not — and hearing, hear not — and —
If you have understanding — understand.’

16.
So saying, Hermes roused the oxen vast;
O’er shadowy mountain and resounding dell,
And flower-paven plains, great Hermes passed;
Till the black night divine, which favouring fell
Around his steps, grew gray, and morning fast
Wakened the world to work, and from her cell
Sea-strewn, the Pallantean Moon sublime
Into her watch-tower just began to climb.

17.
Now to Alpheus he had driven all
The broad-foreheaded oxen of the Sun;
They came unwearied to the lofty stall
And to the water-troughs which ever run
Through the fresh fields — and when with rushgrass tall,
Lotus and all sweet herbage, every one
Had pastured been, the great God made them move
Towards the stall in a collected drove.

18.
A mighty pile of wood the God then heaped,
And having soon conceived the mystery
Of fire, from two smooth laurel branches stripped
The bark, and rubbed them in his palms; — on high
Suddenly forth the burning vapour leaped
And the divine child saw delightedly. —
Mercury first found out for human weal
Tinder-box, matches, fire-irons, flint and steel.

19.
And fine dry logs and roots innumerous
He gathered in a delve upon the ground —
And kindled them — and instantaneous
The strength of the fierce flame was breathed around:
And whilst the might of glorious Vulcan thus
Wrapped the great pile with glare and roaring sound,
Hermes dragged forth two heifers, lowing loud,
Close to the fire — such might was in the God.

20.
And on the earth upon their backs he threw
The panting beasts, and rolled them o'er and o'er,
And bored their lives out. Without more ado
He cut up fat and flesh, and down before
The fire, on spits of wood he placed the two,
Toasting their flesh and ribs, and all the gore
Pursed in the bowels; and while this was done
He stretched their hides over a craggy stone.

21.
We mortals let an ox grow old, and then
Cut it up after long consideration, —
But joyous-minded Hermes from the glen
Drew the fat spoils to the more open station
Of a flat smooth space, and portioned them; and when
He had by lot assigned to each a ration
Of the twelve Gods, his mind became aware
Of all the joys which in religion are.

22.
For the sweet savour of the roasted meat
Tempted him though immortal. Natheless
He checked his haughty will and did not eat,
Though what it cost him words can scarce express,
And every wish to put such morsels sweet
Down his most sacred throat, he did repress;

But soon within the lofty portalled stall
He placed the fat and flesh and bones and all.

23.
And every trace of the fresh butchery
And cooking, the God soon made disappear,
As if it all had vanished through the sky;
He burned the hoofs and horns and head and hair, —
The insatiate fire devoured them hungrily; —
And when he saw that everything was clear,
He quenched the coal, and trampled the black dust,
And in the stream his bloody sandals tossed.

24.
All night he worked in the serene moonshine —
But when the light of day was spread abroad
He sought his natal mountain-peaks divine.
On his long wandering, neither Man nor God
Had met him, since he killed Apollo's kine,
Nor house-dog had barked at him on his road;
Now he obliquely through the keyhole passed,
Like a thin mist, or an autumnal blast.

25.
Right through the temple of the spacious cave
He went with soft light feet — as if his tread
Fell not on earth; no sound their falling gave;
Then to his cradle he crept quick, and spread
The swaddling-clothes about him; and the knave
Lay playing with the covering of the bed
With his left hand about his knees — the right
Held his beloved tortoise-lyre tight.

26.
There he lay innocent as a new-born child,
As gossips say; but though he was a God,
The Goddess, his fair mother, unbeguiled,
Knew all that he had done being abroad:

‘Whence come you, and from what adventure wild,
You cunning rogue, and where have you abode
All the long night, clothed in your impudence?
What have you done since you departed hence?

27.
‘Apollo soon will pass within this gate
And bind your tender body in a chain
Inextricably tight, and fast as fate,
Unless you can delude the God again,
Even when within his arms — ah, runagate!
A pretty torment both for Gods and Men
Your father made when he made you!’—’Dear mother,’
Replied sly Hermes, ‘wherefore scold and bother?

28.
‘As if I were like other babes as old,
And understood nothing of what is what;
And cared at all to hear my mother scold.
I in my subtle brain a scheme have got,
Which whilst the sacred stars round Heaven are rolled
Will profit you and me — nor shall our lot
Be as you counsel, without gifts or food,
To spend our lives in this obscure abode.

29
‘But we will leave this shadow-peopled cave
And live among the Gods, and pass each day
In high communion, sharing what they have
Of profuse wealth and unexhausted prey;
And from the portion which my father gave
To Phoebus, I will snatch my share away,
Which if my father will not — natheless I,
Who am the king of robbers, can but try.

30.
‘And, if Latona’s son should find me out,
I’ll countermine him by a deeper plan;

I'll pierce the Pythian temple-walls, though stout,
And sack the fane of everything I can —
Caldrons and tripods of great worth no doubt,
Each golden cup and polished brazen pan,
All the wrought tapestries and garments gay.' —
So they together talked; — meanwhile the Day

31.
Aethereal born arose out of the flood
Of flowing Ocean, bearing light to men.
Apollo passed toward the sacred wood,
Which from the inmost depths of its green glen
Echoes the voice of Neptune, — and there stood
On the same spot in green Onchestus then
That same old animal, the vine-dresser,
Who was employed hedging his vineyard there.

32.
Latona's glorious Son began:—'I pray
Tell, ancient hedger of Onchestus green,
Whether a drove of kine has passed this way,
All heifers with crooked horns? for they have been
Stolen from the herd in high Pieria,
Where a black bull was fed apart, between
Two woody mountains in a neighbouring glen,
And four fierce dogs watched there, unanimous as men.

33.
'And what is strange, the author of this theft
Has stolen the fatted heifers every one,
But the four dogs and the black bull are left: —
Stolen they were last night at set of sun,
Of their soft beds and their sweet food bereft. —
Now tell me, man born ere the world begun,
Have you seen any one pass with the cows?' —
To whom the man of overhanging brows:

34.
‘My friend, it would require no common skill
Justly to speak of everything I see:
On various purposes of good or ill
Many pass by my vineyard, — and to me
‘Tis difficult to know the invisible
Thoughts, which in all those many minds may be: —
Thus much alone I certainly can say,
I tilled these vines till the decline of day,

35.
‘And then I thought I saw, but dare not speak
With certainty of such a wondrous thing,
A child, who could not have been born a week,
Those fair-horned cattle closely following,
And in his hand he held a polished stick:
And, as on purpose, he walked wavering
From one side to the other of the road,
And with his face opposed the steps he trod.’

36.
Apollo hearing this, passed quickly on —
No winged omen could have shown more clear
That the deceiver was his father’s son.
So the God wraps a purple atmosphere
Around his shoulders, and like fire is gone
To famous Pylos, seeking his kine there,
And found their track and his, yet hardly cold,
And cried—’What wonder do mine eyes behold!

37.
‘Here are the footsteps of the horned herd
Turned back towards their fields of asphodel; —
But THESE are not the tracks of beast or bird,
Gray wolf, or bear, or lion of the dell,
Or maned Centaur — sand was never stirred
By man or woman thus! Inexplicable!

Who with unwearied feet could e'er impress
The sand with such enormous vestiges?

38.
'That was most strange — but this is stranger still!'
Thus having said, Phoebus impetuously
Sought high Cyllene's forest-cinctured hill,
And the deep cavern where dark shadows lie,
And where the ambrosial nymph with happy will
Bore the Saturnian's love-child, Mercury —
And a delightful odour from the dew
Of the hill pastures, at his coming, flew.

39.
And Phoebus stooped under the craggy roof
Arched over the dark cavern: — Maia's child
Perceived that he came angry, far aloof,
About the cows of which he had been beguiled;
And over him the fine and fragrant woof
Of his ambrosial swaddling-clothes he piled —
As among fire-brands lies a burning spark
Covered, beneath the ashes cold and dark.

40.
There, like an infant who had sucked his fill
And now was newly washed and put to bed,
Awake, but courting sleep with weary will,
And gathered in a lump, hands, feet, and head,
He lay, and his beloved tortoise still
He grasped and held under his shoulder-blade.
Phoebus the lovely mountain-goddess knew,
Not less her subtle, swindling baby, who

41.
Lay swathed in his sly wiles. Round every crook
Of the ample cavern, for his kine, Apollo
Looked sharp; and when he saw them not, he took
The glittering key, and opened three great hollow

Recesses in the rock — where many a nook
Was filled with the sweet food immortals swallow,
And mighty heaps of silver and of gold
Were piled within — a wonder to behold!

42.
And white and silver robes, all overwrought
With cunning workmanship of tracery sweet —
Except among the Gods there can be nought
In the wide world to be compared with it.
Latona's offspring, after having sought
His herds in every corner, thus did greet
Great Hermes:—'Little cradled rogue, declare
Of my illustrious heifers, where they are!

43.
'Speak quickly! or a quarrel between us
Must rise, and the event will be, that I
Shall hurl you into dismal Tartarus,
In fiery gloom to dwell eternally;
Nor shall your father nor your mother loose
The bars of that black dungeon — utterly
You shall be cast out from the light of day,
To rule the ghosts of men, unblessed as they.

44.
To whom thus Hermes slily answered:—'Son
Of great Latona, what a speech is this!
Why come you here to ask me what is done
With the wild oxen which it seems you miss?
I have not seen them, nor from any one
Have heard a word of the whole business;
If you should promise an immense reward,
I could not tell more than you now have heard.

45.
'An ox-stealer should be both tall and strong,
And I am but a little new-born thing,

Who, yet at least, can think of nothing wrong: —
My business is to suck, and sleep, and fling
The cradle-clothes about me all day long, —
Or half asleep, hear my sweet mother sing,
And to be washed in water clean and warm,
And hushed and kissed and kept secure from harm.

46.
‘O, let not e’er this quarrel be averred!
The astounded Gods would laugh at you, if e’er
You should allege a story so absurd
As that a new-born infant forth could fare
Out of his home after a savage herd.
I was born yesterday — my small feet are
Too tender for the roads so hard and rough: —
And if you think that this is not enough,

47.
I swear a great oath, by my father’s head,
That I stole not your cows, and that I know
Of no one else, who might, or could, or did. —
Whatever things cows are, I do not know,
For I have only heard the name.’ — This said
He winked as fast as could be, and his brow
Was wrinkled, and a whistle loud gave he,
Like one who hears some strange absurdity.

48.
Apollo gently smiled and said:—’Ay, ay, —
You cunning little rascal, you will bore
Many a rich man’s house, and your array
Of thieves will lay their siege before his door,
Silent as night, in night; and many a day
In the wild glens rough shepherds will deplore
That you or yours, having an appetite,
Met with their cattle, comrade of the night!

49.
‘And this among the Gods shall be your gift,
To be considered as the lord of those
Who swindle, house-break, sheep-steal, and shop-lift; —
But now if you would not your last sleep doze;
Crawl out!’ — Thus saying, Phoebus did uplift
The subtle infant in his swaddling clothes,
And in his arms, according to his wont,
A scheme devised the illustrious Argiphont.

50.
…
…
And sneezed and shuddered — Phoebus on the grass
Him threw, and whilst all that he had designed
He did perform — eager although to pass,
Apollo darted from his mighty mind
Towards the subtle babe the following scoff: —
‘Do not imagine this will get you off,

51.
‘You little swaddled child of Jove and May!
And seized him:—’By this omen I shall trace
My noble herds, and you shall lead the way.’ —
Cyllenian Hermes from the grassy place,
Like one in earnest haste to get away,
Rose, and with hands lifted towards his face
Round both his ears up from his shoulders drew
His swaddling clothes, and—’What mean you to do

52.
‘With me, you unkind God?’ — said Mercury:
‘Is it about these cows you tease me so?
I wish the race of cows were perished! — I
Stole not your cows — I do not even know
What things cows are. Alas! I well may sigh
That since I came into this world of woe,

I should have ever heard the name of one —
But I appeal to the Saturnian's throne.'

53.
Thus Phoebus and the vagrant Mercury
Talked without coming to an explanation,
With adverse purpose. As for Phoebus, he
Sought not revenge, but only information,
And Hermes tried with lies and roguery
To cheat Apollo. — But when no evasion
Served — for the cunning one his match had found —
He paced on first over the sandy ground.

54.
…
He of the Silver Bow the child of Jove
Followed behind, till to their heavenly Sire
Came both his children, beautiful as Love,
And from his equal balance did require
A judgement in the cause wherein they strove.
O'er odorous Olympus and its snows
A murmuring tumult as they came arose, —

55.
And from the folded depths of the great Hill,
While Hermes and Apollo reverent stood
Before Jove's throne, the indestructible
Immortals rushed in mighty multitude;
And whilst their seats in order due they fill,
The lofty Thunderer in a careless mood
To Phoebus said:—'Whence drive you this sweet prey,
This herald-baby, born but yesterday? —

56.
'A most important subject, trifler, this
To lay before the Gods!'—'Nay, Father, nay,
When you have understood the business,
Say not that I alone am fond of prey.

I found this little boy in a recess
Under Cyllene's mountains far away —
A manifest and most apparent thief,
A scandalmonger beyond all belief.

57.
'I never saw his like either in Heaven
Or upon earth for knavery or craft: —
Out of the field my cattle yester-even,
By the low shore on which the loud sea laughed,
He right down to the river-ford had driven;
And mere astonishment would make you daft
To see the double kind of footsteps strange
He has impressed wherever he did range.

58.
'The cattle's track on the black dust, full well
Is evident, as if they went towards
The place from which they came — that asphodel
Meadow, in which I feed my many herds, —
HIS steps were most incomprehensible —
I know not how I can describe in words
Those tracks — he could have gone along the sands
Neither upon his feet nor on his hands; —

59.
'He must have had some other stranger mode
Of moving on: those vestiges immense,
Far as I traced them on the sandy road,
Seemed like the trail of oak-toppings: — but thence
No mark nor track denoting where they trod
The hard ground gave: — but, working at his fence,
A mortal hedger saw him as he passed
To Pylos, with the cows, in fiery haste.

60.
'I found that in the dark he quietly
Had sacrificed some cows, and before light

Had thrown the ashes all dispersedly
About the road — then, still as gloomy night,
Had crept into his cradle, either eye
Rubbing, and cogitating some new sleight.
No eagle could have seen him as he lay
Hid in his cavern from the peering day.

61.
‘I taxed him with the fact, when he averred
Most solemnly that he did neither see
Nor even had in any manner heard
Of my lost cows, whatever things cows be;
Nor could he tell, though offered a reward,
Not even who could tell of them to me.’
So speaking, Phoebus sate; and Hermes then
Addressed the Supreme Lord of Gods and Men: —

62.
‘Great Father, you know clearly beforehand
That all which I shall say to you is sooth;
I am a most veracious person, and
Totally unacquainted with untruth.
At sunrise Phoebus came, but with no band
Of Gods to bear him witness, in great wrath,
To my abode, seeking his heifers there,
And saying that I must show him where they are,

63.
‘Or he would hurl me down the dark abyss.
I know that every Apollonian limb
Is clothed with speed and might and manliness,
As a green bank with flowers — but unlike him
I was born yesterday, and you may guess
He well knew this when he indulged the whim
Of bullying a poor little new-born thing
That slept, and never thought of cow-driving.

64.
‘Am I like a strong fellow who steals kine?
Believe me, dearest Father — such you are —
This driving of the herds is none of mine;
Across my threshold did I wander ne’er,
So may I thrive! I reverence the divine
Sun and the Gods, and I love you, and care
Even for this hard accuser — who must know
I am as innocent as they or you.

65.
‘I swear by these most gloriously-wrought portals
(It is, you will allow, an oath of might)
Through which the multitude of the Immortals
Pass and repass forever, day and night,
Devising schemes for the affairs of mortals —
I am guiltless; and I will requite,
Although mine enemy be great and strong,
His cruel threat — do thou defend the young!’

66.
So speaking, the Cyllenian Argiphont
Winked, as if now his adversary was fitted: —
And Jupiter, according to his wont,
Laughed heartily to hear the subtle-witted
Infant give such a plausible account,
And every word a lie. But he remitted
Judgement at present — and his exhortation
Was, to compose the affair by arbitration.

67.
And they by mighty Jupiter were bidden
To go forth with a single purpose both,
Neither the other chiding nor yet chidden:
And Mercury with innocence and truth
To lead the way, and show where he had hidden
The mighty heifers. — Hermes, nothing loth,

Obeyed the Aegis-bearer's will — for he
Is able to persuade all easily.

68.
These lovely children of Heaven's highest Lord
Hastened to Pylos and the pastures wide
And lofty stalls by the Alphean ford,
Where wealth in the mute night is multiplied
With silent growth. Whilst Hermes drove the herd
Out of the stony cavern, Phoebus spied
The hides of those the little babe had slain,
Stretched on the precipice above the plain.

69.
'How was it possible,' then Phoebus said,
'That you, a little child, born yesterday,
A thing on mother's milk and kisses fed,
Could two prodigious heifers ever flay?
Even I myself may well hereafter dread
Your prowess, offspring of Cyllenian May,
When you grow strong and tall.' — He spoke, and bound
Stiff withy bands the infant's wrists around.

70.
He might as well have bound the oxen wild;
The withy bands, though starkly interknit,
Fell at the feet of the immortal child,
Loosened by some device of his quick wit.
Phoebus perceived himself again beguiled,
And stared — while Hermes sought some hole or pit,
Looking askance and winking fast as thought,
Where he might hide himself and not be caught.

71.
Sudden he changed his plan, and with strange skill
Subdued the strong Latonian, by the might
Of winning music, to his mightier will;
His left hand held the lyre, and in his right

The plectrum struck the chords — unconquerable
Up from beneath his hand in circling flight
The gathering music rose — and sweet as Love
The penetrating notes did live and move

72.
Within the heart of great Apollo — he
Listened with all his soul, and laughed for pleasure.
Close to his side stood harping fearlessly
The unabashed boy; and to the measure
Of the sweet lyre, there followed loud and free
His joyous voice; for he unlocked the treasure
Of his deep song, illustrating the birth
Of the bright Gods, and the dark desert Earth:

73.
And how to the Immortals every one
A portion was assigned of all that is;
But chief Mnemosyne did Maia's son
Clothe in the light of his loud melodies; —
And, as each God was born or had begun,
He in their order due and fit degrees
Sung of his birth and being — and did move
Apollo to unutterable love.

74.
These words were winged with his swift delight:
'You heifer-stealing schemer, well do you
Deserve that fifty oxen should requite
Such minstrelsies as I have heard even now.
Comrade of feasts, little contriving wight,
One of your secrets I would gladly know,
Whether the glorious power you now show forth
Was folded up within you at your birth,

75.
'Or whether mortal taught or God inspired
The power of unpremeditated song?

Many divinest sounds have I admired,
The Olympian Gods and mortal men among;
But such a strain of wondrous, strange, untired,
And soul-awakening music, sweet and strong,
Yet did I never hear except from thee,
Offspring of May, impostor Mercury!

76.
‘What Muse, what skill, what unimagined use,
What exercise of subtlest art, has given
Thy songs such power? — for those who hear may choose
From three, the choicest of the gifts of Heaven,
Delight, and love, and sleep, — sweet sleep, whose dews
Are sweeter than the balmy tears of even: —
And I, who speak this praise, am that Apollo
Whom the Olympian Muses ever follow:

77.
‘And their delight is dance, and the blithe noise
Of song and overflowing poesy;
And sweet, even as desire, the liquid voice
Of pipes, that fills the clear air thrillingly;
But never did my inmost soul rejoice
In this dear work of youthful revelry
As now. I wonder at thee, son of Jove;
Thy harpings and thy song are soft as love.

78.
‘Now since thou hast, although so very small,
Science of arts so glorious, thus I swear, —
And let this cornel javelin, keen and tall,
Witness between us what I promise here, —
That I will lead thee to the Olympian Hall,
Honoured and mighty, with thy mother dear,
And many glorious gifts in joy will give thee,
And even at the end will ne’er deceive thee.’

79.
To whom thus Mercury with prudent speech: —
‘Wisely hast thou inquired of my skill:
I envy thee no thing I know to teach
Even this day: — for both in word and will
I would be gentle with thee; thou canst reach
All things in thy wise spirit, and thy sill
Is highest in Heaven among the sons of Jove,
Who loves thee in the fulness of his love.

80.
‘The Counsellor Supreme has given to thee
Divinest gifts, out of the amplitude
Of his profuse exhaustless treasury;
By thee, ‘tis said, the depths are understood
Of his far voice; by thee the mystery
Of all oracular fates, — and the dread mood
Of the diviner is breathed up; even I —
A child — perceive thy might and majesty.

81.
‘Thou canst seek out and compass all that wit
Can find or teach; — yet since thou wilt, come take
The lyre — be mine the glory giving it —
Strike the sweet chords, and sing aloud, and wake
Thy joyous pleasure out of many a fit
Of tranced sound — and with fleet fingers make
Thy liquid-voiced comrade talk with thee, —
It can talk measured music eloquently.

82.
‘Then bear it boldly to the revel loud,
Love-wakening dance, or feast of solemn state,
A joy by night or day — for those endowed
With art and wisdom who interrogate
It teaches, babbling in delightful mood
All things which make the spirit most elate,

Soothing the mind with sweet familiar play,
Chasing the heavy shadows of dismay.

83.
‘To those who are unskilled in its sweet tongue,
Though they should question most impetuously
Its hidden soul, it gossips something wrong —
Some senseless and impertinent reply.
But thou who art as wise as thou art strong
Canst compass all that thou desirest. I
Present thee with this music-flowing shell,
Knowing thou canst interrogate it well.

84.
‘And let us two henceforth together feed,
On this green mountain-slope and pastoral plain,
The herds in litigation — they will breed
Quickly enough to recompense our pain,
If to the bulls and cows we take good heed; —
And thou, though somewhat over fond of gain,
Grudge me not half the profit.’ — Having spoke,
The shell he proffered, and Apollo took;

85.
And gave him in return the glittering lash,
Installing him as herdsman; — from the look
Of Mercury then laughed a joyous flash.
And then Apollo with the plectrum strook
The chords, and from beneath his hands a crash
Of mighty sounds rushed up, whose music shook
The soul with sweetness, and like an adept
His sweeter voice a just accordance kept.

86.
The herd went wandering o’er the divine mead,
Whilst these most beautiful Sons of Jupiter
Won their swift way up to the snowy head
Of white Olympus, with the joyous lyre

Soothing their journey; and their father dread
Gathered them both into familiar
Affection sweet, — and then, and now, and ever,
Hermes must love Him of the Golden Quiver,

87.
To whom he gave the lyre that sweetly sounded,
Which skilfully he held and played thereon.
He piped the while, and far and wide rebounded
The echo of his pipings; every one
Of the Olympians sat with joy astounded;
While he conceived another piece of fun,
One of his old tricks — which the God of Day
Perceiving, said:—'I fear thee, Son of May; —

88.
'I fear thee and thy sly chameleon spirit,
Lest thou should steal my lyre and crooked bow;
This glory and power thou dost from Jove inherit,
To teach all craft upon the earth below;
Thieves love and worship thee — it is thy merit
To make all mortal business ebb and flow
By roguery: — now, Hermes, if you dare
By sacred Styx a mighty oath to swear

89.
'That you will never rob me, you will do
A thing extremely pleasing to my heart.'
Then Mercury swore by the Stygian dew,
That he would never steal his bow or dart,
Or lay his hands on what to him was due,
Or ever would employ his powerful art
Against his Pythian fane. Then Phoebus swore
There was no God or Man whom he loved more.

90.
'And I will give thee as a good-will token,
The beautiful wand of wealth and happiness;

A perfect three-leaved rod of gold unbroken,
Whose magic will thy footsteps ever bless;
And whatsoever by Jove's voice is spoken
Of earthly or divine from its recess,
It, like a loving soul, to thee will speak,
And more than this, do thou forbear to seek.

91.
'For, dearest child, the divinations high
Which thou requirest, 'tis unlawful ever
That thou, or any other deity
Should understand — and vain were the endeavour;
For they are hidden in Jove's mind, and I,
In trust of them, have sworn that I would never
Betray the counsels of Jove's inmost will
To any God — the oath was terrible.

92.
'Then, golden-wanded brother, ask me not
To speak the fates by Jupiter designed;
But be it mine to tell their various lot
To the unnumbered tribes of human-kind.
Let good to these, and ill to those be wrought
As I dispense — but he who comes consigned
By voice and wings of perfect augury
To my great shrine, shall find avail in me.

93.
'Him will I not deceive, but will assist;
But he who comes relying on such birds
As chatter vainly, who would strain and twist
The purpose of the Gods with idle words,
And deems their knowledge light, he shall have missed
His road — whilst I among my other hoards
His gifts deposit. Yet, O son of May,
I have another wondrous thing to say.

96.
‘There are three Fates, three virgin Sisters, who
Rejoicing in their wind-outspeeding wings,
Their heads with flour snowed over white and new,
Sit in a vale round which Parnassus flings
Its circling skirts — from these I have learned true
Vaticinations of remotest things.
My father cared not. Whilst they search out dooms,
They sit apart and feed on honeycombs.

95.
‘They, having eaten the fresh honey, grow
Drunk with divine enthusiasm, and utter
With earnest willingness the truth they know;
But if deprived of that sweet food, they mutter
All plausible delusions; — these to you
I give; — if you inquire, they will not stutter;
Delight your own soul with them: — any man
You would instruct may profit if he can.

96.
‘Take these and the fierce oxen, Maia’s child —
O’er many a horse and toil-enduring mule,
O’er jagged-jawed lions, and the wild
White-tusked boars, o’er all, by field or pool,
Of cattle which the mighty Mother mild
Nourishes in her bosom, thou shalt rule —
Thou dost alone the veil from death uplift —
Thou givest not — yet this is a great gift.’

97.
Thus King Apollo loved the child of May
In truth, and Jove covered their love with joy.
Hermes with Gods and Men even from that day
Mingled, and wrought the latter much annoy,
And little profit, going far astray
Through the dun night. Farewell, delightful Boy,

Of Jove and Maia sprung, — never by me,
Nor thou, nor other songs, shall unremembered be. 770

HOMER'S HYMN TO CASTOR AND POLLUX.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 2nd edition; dated 1818.)

Ye wild-eyed Muses, sing the Twins of Jove,
Whom the fair-ankled Leda, mixed in love
With mighty Saturn's Heaven-obscuring Child,
On Taygetus, that lofty mountain wild,
Brought forth in joy: mild Pollux, void of blame,
And steed-subduing Castor, heirs of fame.
These are the Powers who earth-born mortals save
And ships, whose flight is swift along the wave.
When wintry tempests o'er the savage sea
Are raging, and the sailors tremblingly
Call on the Twins of Jove with prayer and vow,
Gathered in fear upon the lofty prow,
And sacrifice with snow-white lambs, — the wind
And the huge billow bursting close behind,
Even then beneath the weltering waters bear
The staggering ship — they suddenly appear,
On yellow wings rushing athwart the sky,
And lull the blasts in mute tranquillity,
And strew the waves on the white Ocean's bed,
Fair omen of the voyage; from toil and dread
The sailors rest, rejoicing in the sight,
And plough the quiet sea in safe delight.

HOMER'S HYMN TO THE MOON.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 2nd edition; dated 1818.)

Daughters of Jove, whose voice is melody,
Muses, who know and rule all minstrelsy
Sing the wide-winged Moon! Around the earth,
From her immortal head in Heaven shot forth,
Far light is scattered — boundless glory springs;
Where'er she spreads her many-beaming wings
The lampless air glows round her golden crown.

But when the Moon divine from Heaven is gone
Under the sea, her beams within abide,
Till, bathing her bright limbs in Ocean's tide,
Clothing her form in garments glittering far,
And having yoked to her immortal car
The beam-invested steeds whose necks on high
Curve back, she drives to a remoter sky
A western Crescent, borne impetuously.
Then is made full the circle of her light,
And as she grows, her beams more bright and bright
Are poured from Heaven, where she is hovering then,
A wonder and a sign to mortal men.

The Son of Saturn with this glorious Power
Mingled in love and sleep — to whom she bore
Pandeia, a bright maid of beauty rare
Among the Gods, whose lives eternal are.

Hail Queen, great Moon, white-armed Divinity,
Fair-haired and favourable! thus with thee
My song beginning, by its music sweet
Shall make immortal many a glorious feat
Of demigods, with lovely lips, so well
Which minstrels, servants of the Muses, tell.

HOMER'S HYMN TO THE SUN.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 2nd edition; dated 1818.)

Offspring of Jove, Calliope, once more
To the bright Sun, thy hymn of music pour;
Whom to the child of star-clad Heaven and Earth
Euryphaessa, large-eyed nymph, brought forth;
Euryphaessa, the famed sister fair
Of great Hyperion, who to him did bear
A race of loveliest children; the young Morn,
Whose arms are like twin roses newly born,
The fair-haired Moon, and the immortal Sun,
Who borne by heavenly steeds his race doth run
Unconquerably, illuming the abodes
Of mortal Men and the eternal Gods.

Fiercely look forth his awe-inspiring eyes,
Beneath his golden helmet, whence arise
And are shot forth afar, clear beams of light;
His countenance, with radiant glory bright,
Beneath his graceful locks far shines around,
And the light vest with which his limbs are bound,
Of woof aethereal delicately twined,
Glows in the stream of the uplifting wind.
His rapid steeds soon bear him to the West;
Where their steep flight his hands divine arrest,
And the fleet car with yoke of gold, which he
Sends from bright Heaven beneath the shadowy sea.

HOMER'S HYMN TO THE EARTH: MOTHER OF ALL.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 2nd edition; dated 1818.)

O universal Mother, who dost keep
From everlasting thy foundations deep,
Eldest of things, Great Earth, I sing of thee!
All shapes that have their dwelling in the sea,
All things that fly, or on the ground divine
Live, move, and there are nourished — these are thine;
These from thy wealth thou dost sustain; from thee
Fair babes are born, and fruits on every tree
Hang ripe and large, revered Divinity!

The life of mortal men beneath thy sway
Is held; thy power both gives and takes away!
Happy are they whom thy mild favours nourish;
All things unstinted round them grow and flourish.
For them, endures the life-sustaining field
Its load of harvest, and their cattle yield
Large increase, and their house with wealth is filled.
Such honoured dwell in cities fair and free,
The homes of lovely women, prosperously;
Their sons exult in youth's new budding gladness,
And their fresh daughters free from care or sadness,
With bloom-inwoven dance and happy song,
On the soft flowers the meadow-grass among,
Leap round them sporting — such delights by thee
Are given, rich Power, revered Divinity.

Mother of gods, thou Wife of starry Heaven,
Farewell! be thou propitious, and be given
A happy life for this brief melody,
Nor thou nor other songs shall unremembered be.

HOMER'S HYMN TO MINERVA.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 2nd edition; dated 1818.)

I sing the glorious Power with azure eyes,
Athenian Pallas! tameless, chaste, and wise,
Tritogenia, town-preserving Maid,
Revered and mighty; from his awful head
Whom Jove brought forth, in warlike armour dressed,
Golden, all radiant! wonder strange possessed
The everlasting Gods that Shape to see,
Shaking a javelin keen, impetuously
Rush from the crest of Aegis-bearing Jove;
Fearfully Heaven was shaken, and did move
Beneath the might of the Cerulean-eyed;
Earth dreadfully resounded, far and wide;
And, lifted from its depths, the sea swelled high
In purple billows, the tide suddenly
Stood still, and great Hyperion's son long time
Checked his swift steeds, till, where she stood sublime,
Pallas from her immortal shoulders threw
The arms divine; wise Jove rejoiced to view.
Child of the Aegis-bearer, hail to thee,
Nor thine nor others' praise shall unremembered be.

HOMER'S HYMN TO VENUS.

(Published by Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862; dated 1818.)

(VERSES 1-55, WITH SOME OMISSIONS.)

Muse, sing the deeds of golden Aphrodite,
Who wakens with her smile the lulled delight
Of sweet desire, taming the eternal kings
Of Heaven, and men, and all the living things
That fleet along the air, or whom the sea,
Or earth, with her maternal ministry,
Nourish innumerable, thy delight
All seek … O crowned Aphrodite!
Three spirits canst thou not deceive or quell: —
Minerva, child of Jove, who loves too well
Fierce war and mingling combat, and the fame
Of glorious deeds, to heed thy gentle flame.
Diana … golden-shafted queen,
Is tamed not by thy smiles; the shadows green
Of the wild woods, the bow, the…
And piercing cries amid the swift pursuit
Of beasts among waste mountains, — such delight
Is hers, and men who know and do the right.
Nor Saturn's first-born daughter, Vesta chaste,
Whom Neptune and Apollo wooed the last,
Such was the will of aegis-bearing Jove;
But sternly she refused the ills of Love,
And by her mighty Father's head she swore
An oath not unperformed, that evermore
A virgin she would live mid deities
Divine: her father, for such gentle ties
Renounced, gave glorious gifts — thus in his hall
She sits and feeds luxuriously. O'er all
In every fane, her honours first arise
From men — the eldest of Divinities.

These spirits she persuades not, nor deceives,
But none beside escape, so well she weaves
Her unseen toils; nor mortal men, nor gods
Who live secure in their unseen abodes.
She won the soul of him whose fierce delight
Is thunder — first in glory and in might.
And, as she willed, his mighty mind deceiving,
With mortal limbs his deathless limbs inweaving,
Concealed him from his spouse and sister fair,
Whom to wise Saturn ancient Rhea bare.
but in return,
In Venus Jove did soft desire awaken,
That by her own enchantments overtaken,
She might, no more from human union free,
Burn for a nursling of mortality.
For once amid the assembled Deities,
The laughter-loving Venus from her eyes

Shot forth the light of a soft starlight smile,
And boasting said, that she, secure the while,
Could bring at Will to the assembled Gods
The mortal tenants of earth's dark abodes,
And mortal offspring from a deathless stem
She could produce in scorn and spite of them.
Therefore he poured desire into her breast
Of young Anchises,
Feeding his herds among the mossy fountains
Of the wide Ida's many-folded mountains, —
Whom Venus saw, and loved, and the love clung
Like wasting fire her senses wild among.

THE CYCLOPS.

A SATYRIC DRAMA TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK OF EURIPIDES.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824; dated 1819. Amongst the Shelley manuscripts at the Bodleian there is a copy, 'practically complete,' which has been collated by Mr. C.D. Locock. See "Examination", etc., 1903, pages 64-70. 'Though legible throughout, and comparatively free from corrections, it has the appearance of being a first draft' (Locock).)

SILENUS. ULYSSES. CHORUS OF SATYRS. THE CYCLOPS.

SILENUS:
O Bacchus, what a world of toil, both now
And ere these limbs were overworn with age,
Have I endured for thee! First, when thou fled'st
The mountain-nymphs who nursed thee, driven afar
By the strange madness Juno sent upon thee;
Then in the battle of the Sons of Earth,
When I stood foot by foot close to thy side,
No unpropitious fellow-combatant,
And, driving through his shield my winged spear,
Slew vast Enceladus. Consider now,
Is it a dream of which I speak to thee?
By Jove it is not, for you have the trophies!
And now I suffer more than all before.
For when I heard that Juno had devised
A tedious voyage for you, I put to sea
With all my children quaint in search of you,
And I myself stood on the beaked prow
And fixed the naked mast; and all my boys
Leaning upon their oars, with splash and strain
Made white with foam the green and purple sea, —
And so we sought you, king. We were sailing
Near Malea, when an eastern wind arose,
And drove us to this waste Aetnean rock;
The one-eyed children of the Ocean God,
The man-destroying Cyclopses, inhabit,
On this wild shore, their solitary caves,
And one of these, named Polypheme. has caught us
To be his slaves; and so, for all delight
Of Bacchic sports, sweet dance and melody,
We keep this lawless giant's wandering flocks.
My sons indeed on far declivities,
Young things themselves, tend on the youngling sheep,

But I remain to fill the water-casks,
Or sweeping the hard floor, or ministering
Some impious and abominable meal
To the fell Cyclops. I am wearied of it!
And now I must scrape up the littered floor
With this great iron rake, so to receive
My absent master and his evening sheep
In a cave neat and clean. Even now I see
My children tending the flocks hitherward.
Ha! what is this? are your Sicinnian measures
Even now the same, as when with dance and song
You brought young Bacchus to Althaea's halls?

CHORUS OF SATYRS:

STROPHE:
Where has he of race divine
Wandered in the winding rocks?
Here the air is calm and fine
For the father of the flocks; —
Here the grass is soft and sweet,
And the river-eddies meet
In the trough beside the cave,
Bright as in their fountain wave. —
Neither here, nor on the dew
Of the lawny uplands feeding?
Oh, you come! — a stone at you
Will I throw to mend your breeding; —
Get along, you horned thing,
Wild, seditious, rambling!

EPODE:
An Iacchic melody
To the golden Aphrodite
Will I lift, as erst did I
Seeking her and her delight
With the Maenads, whose white feet

To the music glance and fleet.
Bacchus, O beloved, where,
Shaking wide thy yellow hair,
Wanderest thou alone, afar?
To the one-eyed Cyclops, we,
Who by right thy servants are,
Minister in misery,
In these wretched goat-skins clad,
Far from thy delights and thee.

SILENUS:
Be silent, sons; command the slaves to drive
The gathered flocks into the rock-roofed cave.

CHORUS:
Go! But what needs this serious haste, O father?

SILENUS:
I see a Grecian vessel on the coast,
And thence the rowers with some general
Approaching to this cave. — About their necks
Hang empty vessels, as they wanted food,
And water-flasks. — Oh, miserable strangers!
Whence come they, that they know not what and who
My master is, approaching in ill hour
The inhospitable roof of Polypheme,
And the Cyclopian jaw-bone, man-destroying?
Be silent, Satyrs, while I ask and hear
Whence coming, they arrive the Aetnean hill.

ULYSSES:
Friends, can you show me some clear water-spring,
The remedy of our thirst? Will any one
Furnish with food seamen in want of it?
Ha! what is this? We seem to be arrived
At the blithe court of Bacchus. I observe
This sportive band of Satyrs near the caves.
First let me greet the elder. — Hail!

SILENUS:
Hail thou,
O Stranger! tell thy country and thy race.

ULYSSES:
The Ithacan Ulysses and the king
Of Cephalonia.

SILENUS:
Oh! I know the man,
Wordy and shrewd, the son of Sisyphus.

ULYSSES:
I am the same, but do not rail upon me. —

SILENUS:
Whence sailing do you come to Sicily?

ULYSSES:
From Ilion, and from the Trojan toils.

SILENUS:
How, touched you not at your paternal shore?

ULYSSES:
The strength of tempests bore me here by force.

SILENUS:
The self-same accident occurred to me.

ULYSSES:
Were you then driven here by stress of weather?

SILENUS:
Following the Pirates who had kidnapped Bacchus.

ULYSSES:
What land is this, and who inhabit it? —

SILENUS:
Aetna, the loftiest peak in Sicily.

ULYSSES:
And are there walls, and tower-surrounded towns?

SILENUS:
There are not. — These lone rocks are bare of men.

ULYSSES:
And who possess the land? the race of beasts?

SILENUS:
Cyclops, who live in caverns, not in houses.

ULYSSES:
Obeying whom? Or is the state popular?

SILENUS:
Shepherds: no one obeys any in aught.

ULYSSES:
How live they? do they sow the corn of Ceres?

SILENUS:
On milk and cheese, and on the flesh of sheep.

ULYSSES:
Have they the Bromian drink from the vine's stream?

SILENUS:
Ah! no; they live in an ungracious land.

ULYSSES:
And are they just to strangers? — hospitable?

SILENUS:
They think the sweetest thing a stranger brings
Is his own flesh.

ULYSSES:
What! do they eat man's flesh?

SILENUS:
No one comes here who is not eaten up.

ULYSSES:
The Cyclops now — where is he? Not at home?

SILENUS:
Absent on Aetna, hunting with his dogs.

ULYSSES:
Know'st thou what thou must do to aid us hence?

SILENUS:
I know not: we will help you all we can.

ULYSSES:
Provide us food, of which we are in want.

SILENUS:
Here is not anything, as I said, but meat.

ULYSSES:
But meat is a sweet remedy for hunger.

SILENUS:
Cow's milk there is, and store of curdled cheese.

ULYSSES:
Bring out: — I would see all before I bargain.

SILENUS:
But how much gold will you engage to give?

ULYSSES:
I bring no gold, but Bacchic juice.

SILENUS:
Oh, joy!
Tis long since these dry lips were wet with wine.

ULYSSES:
Maron, the son of the God, gave it me.

SILENUS:
Whom I have nursed a baby in my arms.

ULYSSES:
The son of Bacchus, for your clearer knowledge.

SILENUS:
Have you it now? — or is it in the ship?

ULYSSES:
Old man, this skin contains it, which you see.

SILENUS:
Why, this would hardly be a mouthful for me.

ULYSSES:
Nay, twice as much as you can draw from thence.

SILENUS:
You speak of a fair fountain, sweet to me.

ULYSSES:
Would you first taste of the unmingled wine?

SILENUS:
‘Tis just — tasting invites the purchaser.

ULYSSES:
Here is the cup, together with the skin.

SILENUS:
Pour: that the draught may fillip my remembrance.

ULYSSES:
See!

SILENUS:
Papaiapax! what a sweet smell it has!

ULYSSES:
You see it then? —

SILENUS:
By Jove, no! but I smell it.

ULYSSES:
Taste, that you may not praise it in words only.

SILENUS:
Babai! Great Bacchus calls me forth to dance!
Joy! joy!

ULYSSES:
Did it flow sweetly down your throat?

SILENUS:
So that it tingled to my very nails.

ULYSSES:
And in addition I will give you gold.

SILENUS:
Let gold alone! only unlock the cask.

ULYSSES:
Bring out some cheeses now, or a young goat.

SILENUS:
That will I do, despising any master.
Yes, let me drink one cup, and I will give
All that the Cyclops feed upon their mountains.

…

CHORUS:
Ye have taken Troy and laid your hands on Helen?

ULYSSES:
And utterly destroyed the race of Priam.

…

SILENUS:
The wanton wretch! she was bewitched to see
The many-coloured anklets and the chain
Of woven gold which girt the neck of Paris,
And so she left that good man Menelaus.
There should be no more women in the world
But such as are reserved for me alone. —
See, here are sheep, and here are goats, Ulysses,
Here are unsparing cheeses of pressed milk;
Take them; depart with what good speed ye may;
First leaving my reward, the Bacchic dew
Of joy-inspiring grapes.

ULYSSES:
Ah me! Alas!
What shall we do? the Cyclops is at hand!
Old man, we perish! whither can we fly?

SILENUS:
Hide yourselves quick within that hollow rock.

ULYSSES:
‘Twere perilous to fly into the net.

SILENUS:
The cavern has recesses numberless;
Hide yourselves quick.

ULYSSES:
That will I never do!
The mighty Troy would be indeed disgraced
If I should fly one man. How many times
Have I withstood, with shield immovable.
Ten thousand Phrygians! — if I needs must die,
Yet will I die with glory; — if I live,
The praise which I have gained will yet remain.

SILENUS:
What, ho! assistance, comrades, haste, assistance!

(THE CYCLOPS, SILENUS, ULYSSES; CHORUS.)

CYCLOPS:
What is this tumult? Bacchus is not here,
Nor tympanies nor brazen castanets.
How are my young lambs in the cavern? Milking
Their dams or playing by their sides? And is
The new cheese pressed into the bulrush baskets?
Speak! I'll beat some of you till you rain tears —
Look up, not downwards when I speak to you.

SILENUS:
See! I now gape at Jupiter himself;
I stare upon Orion and the stars.

CYCLOPS:
Well, is the dinner fitly cooked and laid?

SILENUS:
All ready, if your throat is ready too.

CYCLOPS:
Are the bowls full of milk besides?

SILENUS:
O'er-brimming;

So you may drink a tunful if you will.

CYCLOPS:
Is it ewe's milk or cow's milk, or both mixed? —

SILENUS:
Both, either; only pray don't swallow me.

CYCLOPS:
By no means. —
…
What is this crowd I see beside the stalls?
Outlaws or thieves? for near my cavern-home
I see my young lambs coupled two by two
With willow bands; mixed with my cheeses lie
Their implements; and this old fellow here
Has his bald head broken with stripes.

SILENUS:
Ah me!
I have been beaten till I burn with fever.

CYCLOPS:
By whom? Who laid his fist upon your head?

SILENUS:
Those men, because I would not suffer them
To steal your goods.

CYCLOPS:
Did not the rascals know
I am a God, sprung from the race of Heaven?

SILENUS:
I told them so, but they bore off your things,
And ate the cheese in spite of all I said,
And carried out the lambs — and said, moreover,
They'd pin you down with a three-cubit collar,

And pull your vitals out through your one eye,
Furrow your back with stripes, then, binding you,
Throw you as ballast into the ship's hold,
And then deliver you, a slave, to move
Enormous rocks, or found a vestibule.

CYCLOPS:
In truth? Nay, haste, and place in order quickly
The cooking-knives, and heap upon the hearth,
And kindle it, a great faggot of wood. —
As soon as they are slaughtered, they shall fill
My belly, broiling warm from the live coals,
Or boiled and seethed within the bubbling caldron.
I am quite sick of the wild mountain game;
Of stags and lions I have gorged enough,
And I grow hungry for the flesh of men.

SILENUS:
Nay, master, something new is very pleasant
After one thing forever, and of late
Very few strangers have approached our cave.

ULYSSES:
Hear, Cyclops, a plain tale on the other side.
We, wanting to buy food, came from our ship
Into the neighbourhood of your cave, and here
This old Silenus gave us in exchange
These lambs for wine, the which he took and drank,
And all by mutual compact, without force.
There is no word of truth in what he says,
For slyly he was selling all your store.

SILENUS:
I? May you perish, wretch —

ULYSSES:
If I speak false!

SILENUS:
Cyclops, I swear by Neptune who begot thee,
By mighty Triton and by Nereus old,
Calypso and the glaucous Ocean Nymphs,
The sacred waves and all the race of fishes —
Be these the witnesses, my dear sweet master,
My darling little Cyclops, that I never
Gave any of your stores to these false strangers; —
If I speak false may those whom most I love,
My children, perish wretchedly!

CHORUS:
There stop!
I saw him giving these things to the strangers.
If I speak false, then may my father perish,
But do not thou wrong hospitality.

CYCLOPS:
You lie! I swear that he is juster far
Than Rhadamanthus — I trust more in him.
But let me ask, whence have ye sailed, O strangers?
Who are you? And what city nourished ye?

ULYSSES:
Our race is Ithacan — having destroyed
The town of Troy, the tempests of the sea
Have driven us on thy land, O Polypheme.

CYCLOPS:
What, have ye shared in the unenvied spoil
Of the false Helen, near Scamander's stream?

ULYSSES:
The same, having endured a woful toil.

CYCLOPS:
Oh, basest expedition! sailed ye not
From Greece to Phrygia for one woman's sake?

ULYSSES:
‘Twas the Gods’ work — no mortal was in fault.
But, O great Offspring of the Ocean-King,
We pray thee and admonish thee with freedom,
That thou dost spare thy friends who visit thee,
And place no impious food within thy jaws.
For in the depths of Greece we have upreared
Temples to thy great Father, which are all
His homes. The sacred bay of Taenarus
Remains inviolate, and each dim recess
Scooped high on the Malean promontory,
And aery Sunium’s silver-veined crag,
Which divine Pallas keeps unprofaned ever,
The Gerastian asylums, and whate’er
Within wide Greece our enterprise has kept
From Phrygian contumely; and in which
You have a common care, for you inhabit
The skirts of Grecian land, under the roots
Of Aetna and its crags, spotted with fire.
Turn then to converse under human laws,
Receive us shipwrecked suppliants, and provide
Food, clothes, and fire, and hospitable gifts;
Nor fixing upon oxen-piercing spits
Our limbs, so fill your belly and your jaws.
Priam’s wide land has widowed Greece enough;
And weapon-winged murder leaped together
Enough of dead, and wives are husbandless,
And ancient women and gray fathers wail
Their childless age; — if you should roast the rest —
And ‘tis a bitter feast that you prepare —
Where then would any turn? Yet be persuaded;
Forgo the lust of your jaw-bone; prefer
Pious humanity to wicked will:
Many have bought too dear their evil joys.

SILENUS:
Let me advise you, do not spare a morsel

Of all his flesh. If you should eat his tongue
You would become most eloquent, O Cyclops.

CYCLOPS:
Wealth, my good fellow, is the wise man's God,
All other things are a pretence and boast.
What are my father's ocean promontories,
The sacred rocks whereon he dwells, to me?
Stranger, I laugh to scorn Jove's thunderbolt,
I know not that his strength is more than mine.
As to the rest I care not. — When he pours
Rain from above, I have a close pavilion
Under this rock, in which I lie supine,
Feasting on a roast calf or some wild beast,
And drinking pans of milk, and gloriously
Emulating the thunder of high Heaven.
And when the Thracian wind pours down the snow,
I wrap my body in the skins of beasts,
Kindle a fire, and bid the snow whirl on.
The earth, by force, whether it will or no,
Bringing forth grass, fattens my flocks and herds,
Which, to what other God but to myself
And this great belly, first of deities,
Should I be bound to sacrifice? I well know
The wise man's only Jupiter is this,
To eat and drink during his little day,
And give himself no care. And as for those
Who complicate with laws the life of man,
I freely give them tears for their reward.
I will not cheat my soul of its delight,
Or hesitate in dining upon you: —
And that I may be quit of all demands,
These are my hospitable gifts; — fierce fire
And yon ancestral caldron, which o'er-bubbling
Shall finely cook your miserable flesh.
Creep in! —

…

ULYSSES:
Ai! ai! I have escaped the Trojan toils,
I have escaped the sea, and now I fall
Under the cruel grasp of one impious man.
O Pallas, Mistress, Goddess, sprung from Jove,
Now, now, assist me! Mightier toils than Troy
Are these; — I totter on the chasms of peril; —
And thou who inhabitest the thrones
Of the bright stars, look, hospitable Jove,
Upon this outrage of thy deity,
Otherwise be considered as no God!

CHORUS (ALONE):
For your gaping gulf and your gullet wide,
The ravin is ready on every side,
The limbs of the strangers are cooked and done;
There is boiled meat, and roast meat, and meat from the coal,
You may chop it, and tear it, and gnash it for fun,
An hairy goat's-skin contains the whole.
Let me but escape, and ferry me o'er
The stream of your wrath to a safer shore.
The Cyclops Aetnean is cruel and bold,
He murders the strangers
That sit on his hearth,
And dreads no avengers
To rise from the earth.
He roasts the men before they are cold,
He snatches them broiling from the coal,
And from the caldron pulls them whole,
And minces their flesh and gnaws their bone
With his cursed teeth, till all be gone.
Farewell, foul pavilion:
Farewell, rites of dread!
The Cyclops vermilion,
With slaughter uncloying,

Now feasts on the dead,
In the flesh of strangers joying!

ULYSSES:
O Jupiter! I saw within the cave
Horrible things; deeds to be feigned in words,
But not to be believed as being done.

CHORUS:
What! sawest thou the impious Polypheme
Feasting upon your loved companions now?

ULYSSES:
Selecting two, the plumpest of the crowd,
He grasped them in his hands. —

CHORUS:
Unhappy man!

…

ULYSSES:
Soon as we came into this craggy place,
Kindling a fire, he cast on the broad hearth
The knotty limbs of an enormous oak,
Three waggon-loads at least, and then he strewed
Upon the ground, beside the red firelight,
His couch of pine-leaves; and he milked the cows,
And pouring forth the white milk, filled a bowl
Three cubits wide and four in depth, as much
As would contain ten amphorae, and bound it
With ivy wreaths; then placed upon the fire
A brazen pot to boil, and made red hot
The points of spits, not sharpened with the sickle
But with a fruit tree bough, and with the jaws
Of axes for Aetnean slaughterings.
And when this God-abandoned Cook of Hell
Had made all ready, he seized two of us

And killed them in a kind of measured manner;
For he flung one against the brazen rivets
Of the huge caldron, and seized the other
By the foot's tendon, and knocked out his brains
Upon the sharp edge of the craggy stone:
Then peeled his flesh with a great cooking-knife
And put him down to roast. The other's limbs
He chopped into the caldron to be boiled.
And I, with the tears raining from my eyes,
Stood near the Cyclops, ministering to him;
The rest, in the recesses of the cave,
Clung to the rock like bats, bloodless with fear.
When he was filled with my companions' flesh,
He threw himself upon the ground and sent
A loathsome exhalation from his maw.
Then a divine thought came to me. I filled
The cup of Maron, and I offered him
To taste, and said:—'Child of the Ocean God,
Behold what drink the vines of Greece produce,
The exultation and the joy of Bacchus.'
He, satiated with his unnatural food,
Received it, and at one draught drank it off,
And taking my hand, praised me:—'Thou hast given
A sweet draught after a sweet meal, dear guest.'
And I, perceiving that it pleased him, filled
Another cup, well knowing that the wine
Would wound him soon and take a sure revenge.
And the charm fascinated him, and I
Plied him cup after cup, until the drink
Had warmed his entrails, and he sang aloud
In concert with my wailing fellow-seamen
A hideous discord — and the cavern rung.
I have stolen out, so that if you will
You may achieve my safety and your own.
But say, do you desire, or not, to fly
This uncompanionable man, and dwell
As was your wont among the Grecian Nymphs

Within the fanes of your beloved God?
Your father there within agrees to it,
But he is weak and overcome with wine,
And caught as if with bird-lime by the cup,
He claps his wings and crows in doting joy.
You who are young escape with me, and find
Bacchus your ancient friend; unsuited he
To this rude Cyclops.

CHORUS:
Oh my dearest friend,
That I could see that day, and leave for ever
The impious Cyclops.

…

ULYSSES:
Listen then what a punishment I have
For this fell monster, how secure a flight
From your hard servitude.

CHORUS:
O sweeter far
Than is the music of an Asian lyre
Would be the news of Polypheme destroyed.

ULYSSES:
Delighted with the Bacchic drink he goes
To call his brother Cyclops — who inhabit
A village upon Aetna not far off.

CHORUS:
I understand, catching him when alone
You think by some measure to dispatch him,
Or thrust him from the precipice.

ULYSSES:
Oh no;

Nothing of that kind; my device is subtle.

CHORUS:
How then? I heard of old that thou wert wise.

ULYSSES:
I will dissuade him from this plan, by saying
It were unwise to give the Cyclopses
This precious drink, which if enjoyed alone
Would make life sweeter for a longer time.
When, vanquished by the Bacchic power, he sleeps,
There is a trunk of olive wood within,
Whose point having made sharp with this good sword
I will conceal in fire, and when I see
It is alight, will fix it, burning yet,
Within the socket of the Cyclops' eye
And melt it out with fire — as when a man
Turns by its handle a great auger round,
Fitting the framework of a ship with beams,
So will I, in the Cyclops' fiery eye
Turn round the brand and dry the pupil up.

CHORUS:
Joy! I am mad with joy at your device.

ULYSSES:
And then with you, my friends, and the old man,
We'll load the hollow depth of our black ship,
And row with double strokes from this dread shore.

CHORUS:
May I, as in libations to a God,
Share in the blinding him with the red brand?
I would have some communion in his death.

ULYSSES:
Doubtless: the brand is a great brand to hold.

CHORUS:
Oh! I would lift an hundred waggon-loads,
If like a wasp's nest I could scoop the eye out
Of the detested Cyclops.

ULYSSES:
Silence now!
Ye know the close device — and when I call,
Look ye obey the masters of the craft.
I will not save myself and leave behind
My comrades in the cave: I might escape,
Having got clear from that obscure recess,
But 'twere unjust to leave in jeopardy
The dear companions who sailed here with me.

CHORUS:
Come! who is first, that with his hand
Will urge down the burning brand
Through the lids, and quench and pierce
The Cyclops' eye so fiery fierce?

SEMICHORUS 1 *(SONG WITHIN)*:
Listen! listen! he is coming,
A most hideous discord humming.
Drunken, museless, awkward, yelling,
Far along his rocky dwelling;
Let us with some comic spell
Teach the yet unteachable.
By all means he must be blinded,
If my counsel be but minded.

SEMICHORUS 2:
Happy thou made odorous
With the dew which sweet grapes weep,
To the village hastening thus,
Seek the vines that soothe to sleep;
Having first embraced thy friend,
Thou in luxury without end,

With the strings of yellow hair,
Of thy voluptuous leman fair,
Shalt sit playing on a bed! —
Speak! what door is opened?

CYCLOPS:
Ha! ha! ha! I'm full of wine,
Heavy with the joy divine,
With the young feast oversated;
Like a merchant's vessel freighted
To the water's edge, my crop
Is laden to the gullet's top.
The fresh meadow grass of spring
Tempts me forth thus wandering
To my brothers on the mountains,
Who shall share the wine's sweet fountains.
Bring the cask, O stranger, bring!

CHORUS:
One with eyes the fairest
Cometh from his dwelling;
Some one loves thee, rarest
Bright beyond my telling.
In thy grace thou shinest
Like some nymph divinest
In her caverns dewy: —
All delights pursue thee,
Soon pied flowers, sweet-breathing,
Shall thy head be wreathing.

ULYSSES:
Listen, O Cyclops, for I am well skilled
In Bacchus, whom I gave thee of to drink.

CYCLOPS:
What sort of God is Bacchus then accounted?

ULYSSES:
The greatest among men for joy of life.

CYCLOPS:
I gulped him down with very great delight.

ULYSSES:
This is a God who never injures men.

CYCLOPS:
How does the God like living in a skin?

ULYSSES:
He is content wherever he is put.

CYCLOPS:
Gods should not have their body in a skin.

ULYSSES:
If he gives joy, what is his skin to you?

CYCLOPS:
I hate the skin, but love the wine within.

ULYSSES:
Stay here now: drink, and make your spirit glad.

CYCLOPS:
Should I not share this liquor with my brothers?

ULYSSES:
Keep it yourself, and be more honoured so.

CYCLOPS:
I were more useful, giving to my friends.

ULYSSES:
But village mirth breeds contests, broils, and blows.

CYCLOPS:
When I am drunk none shall lay hands on me. —

ULYSSES:
A drunken man is better within doors.

CYCLOPS:
He is a fool, who drinking, loves not mirth.

ULYSSES:
But he is wise, who drunk, remains at home.

CYCLOPS:
What shall I do, Silenus? Shall I stay?

SILENUS:
Stay — for what need have you of pot companions?

CYCLOPS:
Indeed this place is closely carpeted
With flowers and grass.

SILENUS:
And in the sun-warm noon
‘Tis sweet to drink. Lie down beside me now,
Placing your mighty sides upon the ground.

CYCLOPS:
What do you put the cup behind me for?

SILENUS:
That no one here may touch it.

CYCLOPS:
Thievish One!
You want to drink; — here place it in the midst.
And thou, O stranger, tell how art thou called?

ULYSSES:
My name is Nobody. What favour now
Shall I receive to praise you at your hands?

CYCLOPS:
I'll feast on you the last of your companions.

ULYSSES:
You grant your guest a fair reward, O Cyclops.

CYCLOPS:
Ha! what is this? Stealing the wine, you rogue!

SILENUS:
It was this stranger kissing me because
I looked so beautiful.

CYCLOPS:
You shall repent
For kissing the coy wine that loves you not.

SILENUS:
By Jupiter! you said that I am fair.

CYCLOPS:
Pour out, and only give me the cup full.

SILENUS:
How is it mixed? let me observe.

CYCLOPS:
Curse you!
Give it me so.

SILENUS:
Not till I see you wear
That coronal, and taste the cup to you.

CYCLOPS:
Thou wily traitor!

SILENUS:
But the wine is sweet.
Ay, you will roar if you are caught in drinking.

CYCLOPS:
See now, my lip is clean and all my beard.

SILENUS:
Now put your elbow right and drink again.
As you see me drink — …

CYCLOPS:
How now?

SILENUS:
Ye Gods, what a delicious gulp!

CYCLOPS:
Guest, take it; — you pour out the wine for me.

ULYSSES:
The wine is well accustomed to my hand.

CYCLOPS:
Pour out the wine!

ULYSSES:
I pour; only be silent.

CYCLOPS:
Silence is a hard task to him who drinks.

ULYSSES:
Take it and drink it off; leave not a dreg.
Oh that the drinker died with his own draught!

CYCLOPS:
Papai! the vine must be a sapient plant.

ULYSSES:
If you drink much after a mighty feast,
Moistening your thirsty maw, you will sleep well;
If you leave aught, Bacchus will dry you up.

CYCLOPS:
Ho! ho! I can scarce rise. What pure delight!
The heavens and earth appear to whirl about
Confusedly. I see the throne of Jove
And the clear congregation of the Gods.
Now if the Graces tempted me to kiss
I would not — for the loveliest of them all
I would not leave this Ganymede.

SILENUS:
Polypheme,
I am the Ganymede of Jupiter.

CYCLOPS:
By Jove, you are; I bore you off from Dardanus.

…

(ULYSSES AND THE CHORUS.)

ULYSSES:
Come, boys of Bacchus, children of high race,
This man within is folded up in sleep,
And soon will vomit flesh from his fell maw;
The brand under the shed thrusts out its smoke,
No preparation needs, but to burn out
The monster's eye; — but bear yourselves like men.

CHORUS:
We will have courage like the adamant rock,

All things are ready for you here; go in,
Before our father shall perceive the noise.

ULYSSES:
Vulcan, Aetnean king! burn out with fire
The shining eye of this thy neighbouring monster!
And thou, O Sleep, nursling of gloomy Night,
Descend unmixed on this God-hated beast,
And suffer not Ulysses and his comrades,
Returning from their famous Trojan toils,
To perish by this man, who cares not either
For God or mortal; or I needs must think
That Chance is a supreme divinity,
And things divine are subject to her power.

CHORUS:
Soon a crab the throat will seize
Of him who feeds upon his guest,
Fire will burn his lamp-like eyes
In revenge of such a feast!
A great oak stump now is lying
In the ashes yet undying.
Come, Maron, come!
Raging let him fix the doom,
Let him tear the eyelid up
Of the Cyclops — that his cup
May be evil!
Oh! I long to dance and revel
With sweet Bromian, long desired,
In loved ivy wreaths attired;
Leaving this abandoned home —
Will the moment ever come?

ULYSSES:
Be silent, ye wild things! Nay, hold your peace,
And keep your lips quite close; dare not to breathe,

Or spit, or e'en wink, lest ye wake the monster,
Until his eye be tortured out with fire.

CHORUS:
Nay, we are silent, and we chaw the air.

ULYSSES:
Come now, and lend a hand to the great stake
Within — it is delightfully red hot.

CHORUS:
You then command who first should seize the stake
To burn the Cyclops' eye, that all may share
In the great enterprise.

SEMICHORUS 1:
We are too far;
We cannot at this distance from the door
Thrust fire into his eye.

SEMICHORUS 2:
And we just now
Have become lame! cannot move hand or foot.

CHORUS:
The same thing has occurred to us, — our ankles
Are sprained with standing here, I know not how.

ULYSSES:
What, sprained with standing still?

CHORUS:
And there is dust
Or ashes in our eyes, I know not whence.

ULYSSES:
Cowardly dogs! ye will not aid me then?

CHORUS:
With pitying my own back and my back-bone,
And with not wishing all my teeth knocked out,
This cowardice comes of itself — but stay,
I know a famous Orphic incantation
To make the brand stick of its own accord
Into the skull of this one-eyed son of Earth.

ULYSSES:
Of old I knew ye thus by nature; now
I know ye better. — I will use the aid
Of my own comrades. Yet though weak of hand
Speak cheerfully, that so ye may awaken
The courage of my friends with your blithe words.

CHORUS:
This I will do with peril of my life,
And blind you with my exhortations, Cyclops.
Hasten and thrust,
And parch up to dust,
The eye of the beast
Who feeds on his guest.
Burn and blind
The Aetnean hind!
Scoop and draw,
But beware lest he claw
Your limbs near his maw.

CYCLOPS:
Ah me! my eyesight is parched up to cinders.

CHORUS:
What a sweet paean! sing me that again!

CYCLOPS:
Ah me! indeed, what woe has fallen upon me!
But, wretched nothings, think ye not to flee

Out of this rock; I, standing at the outlet,
Will bar the way and catch you as you pass.

CHORUS:
What are you roaring out, Cyclops?

CYCLOPS:
I perish!

CHORUS:
For you are wicked.

CYCLOPS:
And besides miserable.

CHORUS:
What, did you fall into the fire when drunk?

CYCLOPS:
‘Twas Nobody destroyed me.

CHORUS:
Why then no one
Can be to blame.

CYCLOPS:
I say ‘twas Nobody
Who blinded me.

CHORUS:
Why then you are not blind.

CYCLOPS:
I wish you were as blind as I am.

CHORUS:
Nay,
It cannot be that no one made you blind.

CYCLOPS:
You jeer me; where, I ask, is Nobody?

CHORUS:
Nowhere, O Cyclops.

CYCLOPS:
It was that stranger ruined me: — the wretch
First gave me wine and then burned out my eye,
For wine is strong and hard to struggle with.
Have they escaped, or are they yet within?

CHORUS:
They stand under the darkness of the rock
And cling to it.

CYCLOPS:
At my right hand or left?

CHORUS:
Close on your right.

CYCLOPS:
Where?

CHORUS:
Near the rock itself.
You have them.

CYCLOPS:
Oh, misfortune on misfortune!
I've cracked my skull.

CHORUS:
Now they escape you — there.

CYCLOPS:
Not there, although you say so.

CHORUS:
Not on that side.

CYCLOPS:
Where then?

CHORUS:
They creep about you on your left.

CYCLOPS:
Ah! I am mocked! They jeer me in my ills.

CHORUS:
Not there! he is a little there beyond you.

CYCLOPS:
Detested wretch! where are you?

ULYSSES:
Far from you
I keep with care this body of Ulysses.

CYCLOPS:
What do you say? You proffer a new name.

ULYSSES:
My father named me so; and I have taken
A full revenge for your unnatural feast;
I should have done ill to have burned down Troy
And not revenged the murder of my comrades.

CYCLOPS:
Ai! ai! the ancient oracle is accomplished;
It said that I should have my eyesight blinded
By your coming from Troy, yet it foretold
That you should pay the penalty for this
By wandering long over the homeless sea.

ULYSSES:
I bid thee weep — consider what I say;
I go towards the shore to drive my ship
To mine own land, o’er the Sicilian wave.

CYCLOPS:
Not so, if, whelming you with this huge stone,
I can crush you and all your men together;
I will descend upon the shore, though blind,
Groping my way adown the steep ravine.

CHORUS:
And we, the shipmates of Ulysses now,
Will serve our Bacchus all our happy lives.

EPIGRAMS.

(These four Epigrams were published — numbers 2 and 4 without title — by Mrs. Shelley, "Poetical Works", 1839, 1st edition.)

1. — TO STELLA.

FROM THE GREEK OF PLATO.

Thou wert the morning star among the living,
Ere thy fair light had fled; —
Now, having died, thou art as Hesperus, giving
New splendour to the dead.

2. — KISSING HELENA.

FROM THE GREEK OF PLATO.

Kissing Helena, together
With my kiss, my soul beside it
Came to my lips, and there I kept it, —
For the poor thing had wandered thither,
To follow where the kiss should guide it,
Oh, cruel I, to intercept it!

3. — SPIRIT OF PLATO.

FROM THE GREEK.

Eagle! why soarest thou above that tomb?
To what sublime and star-ypaven home
Floatest thou? —
I am the image of swift Plato's spirit,
Ascending heaven; Athens doth inherit
His corpse below.

4. — CIRCUMSTANCE.

FROM THE GREEK.

A man who was about to hang himself,
Finding a purse, then threw away his rope;
The owner, coming to reclaim his pelf,
The halter found; and used it. So is Hope
Changed for Despair — one laid upon the shelf,
We take the other. Under Heaven's high cope
Fortune is God — all you endure and do
Depends on circumstance as much as you.

FRAGMENT OF THE ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF ADONIS.

FROM THE GREEK OF BION.

(Published by Forman, "Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1876.)

I mourn Adonis dead — loveliest Adonis —
Dead, dead Adonis — and the Loves lament.
Sleep no more, Venus, wrapped in purple woof —
Wake violet-stoled queen, and weave the crown
Of Death,—'tis Misery calls, — for he is dead.

The lovely one lies wounded in the mountains,
His white thigh struck with the white tooth; he scarce
Yet breathes; and Venus hangs in agony there.
The dark blood wanders o'er his snowy limbs,
His eyes beneath their lids are lustreless,
The rose has fled from his wan lips, and there
That kiss is dead, which Venus gathers yet.

A deep, deep wound Adonis…
A deeper Venus bears upon her heart.
See, his beloved dogs are gathering round —
The Oread nymphs are weeping — Aphrodite
With hair unbound is wandering through the woods,
'Wildered, ungirt, unsandalled — the thorns pierce
Her hastening feet and drink her sacred blood.
Bitterly screaming out, she is driven on
Through the long vales; and her Assyrian boy,
Her love, her husband, calls — the purple blood
From his struck thigh stains her white navel now,
Her bosom, and her neck before like snow.

Alas for Cytherea — the Loves mourn —
The lovely, the beloved is gone! — and now
Her sacred beauty vanishes away.

For Venus whilst Adonis lived was fair —
Alas! her loveliness is dead with him.
The oaks and mountains cry, Ai! ai! Adonis!
The springs their waters change to tears and weep —
The flowers are withered up with grief…

Ai! ai! … Adonis is dead
Echo resounds … Adonis dead.
Who will weep not thy dreadful woe. O Venus?
Soon as she saw and knew the mortal wound
Of her Adonis — saw the life-blood flow
From his fair thigh, now wasting, — wailing loud
She clasped him, and cried … 'Stay, Adonis!
Stay, dearest one,…
and mix my lips with thine —
Wake yet a while, Adonis — oh, but once,
That I may kiss thee now for the last time —
But for as long as one short kiss may live —
Oh, let thy breath flow from thy dying soul
Even to my mouth and heart, that I may suck
That…'

FRAGMENT OF THE ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF BION.

FROM THE GREEK OF MOSCHUS.

(Published from the Hunt manuscripts by Forman, "Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1876.)

Ye Dorian woods and waves, lament aloud, —
Augment your tide, O streams, with fruitless tears,
For the beloved Bion is no more.
Let every tender herb and plant and flower,
From each dejected bud and drooping bloom,
Shed dews of liquid sorrow, and with breath
Of melancholy sweetness on the wind
Diffuse its languid love; let roses blush,
Anemones grow paler for the loss
Their dells have known; and thou, O hyacinth,
Utter thy legend now — yet more, dumb flower,
Than 'Ah! alas!' — thine is no common grief —
Bion the *(sweetest singer)* is no more.

FROM THE GREEK OF MOSCHUS.

(Published with "Alastor", 1816.)

Tan ala tan glaukan otan onemos atrema Balle — k.t.l.

When winds that move not its calm surface sweep
The azure sea, I love the land no more;
The smiles of the serene and tranquil deep
Tempt my unquiet mind. — But when the roar
Of Ocean's gray abyss resounds, and foam
Gathers upon the sea, and vast waves burst,
I turn from the drear aspect to the home
Of Earth and its deep woods, where, interspersed,
When winds blow loud, pines make sweet melody.
Whose house is some lone bark, whose toil the sea,

Whose prey the wandering fish, an evil lot
Has chosen. — But I my languid limbs will fling
Beneath the plane, where the brook's murmuring
Moves the calm spirit, but disturbs it not.

PAN, ECHO, AND THE SATYR.

FROM THE GREEK OF MOSCHUS.

(Published (without title) by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824. There is a draft amongst the Hunt manuscripts.)

Pan loved his neighbour Echo — but that child
Of Earth and Air pined for the Satyr leaping;
The Satyr loved with wasting madness wild
The bright nymph Lyda, — and so three went weeping.
As Pan loved Echo, Echo loved the Satyr,
The Satyr, Lyda; and so love consumed them. —
And thus to each — which was a woful matter —
To bear what they inflicted Justice doomed them;
For, inasmuch as each might hate the lover,
Each, loving, so was hated. — Ye that love not
Be warned — in thought turn this example over,
That when ye love, the like return ye prove not.

FROM VERGIL'S TENTH ECLOGUE.

(VERSES 1-26.)

(Published by Rossetti, "Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1870, from the Boscombe manuscripts now in the Bodleian. Mr. Locock ("Examination", etc., 1903, pages 47-50), as the result of his collation of the same manuscripts, gives a revised and expanded version which we print below.)

Melodious Arethusa, o'er my verse
Shed thou once more the spirit of thy stream:
Who denies verse to Gallus? So, when thou
Glidest beneath the green and purple gleam
Of Syracusan waters, mayst thou flow
Unmingled with the bitter Doric dew!
Begin, and, whilst the goats are browsing now
The soft leaves, in our way let us pursue
The melancholy loves of Gallus. List!
We sing not to the dead: the wild woods knew
His sufferings, and their echoes…
Young Naiads,…in what far woodlands wild
Wandered ye when unworthy love possessed
Your Gallus? Not where Pindus is up-piled,
Nor where Parnassus' sacred mount, nor where
Aonian Aganippe expands…
The laurels and the myrtle-copses dim.
The pine-encircled mountain, Maenalus,
The cold crags of Lycaeus, weep for him;
And Sylvan, crowned with rustic coronals,
Came shaking in his speed the budding wands
And heavy lilies which he bore: we knew
Pan the Arcadian.

…

‘What madness is this, Gallus? Thy heart’s care
With willing steps pursues another there.’

THE SAME.

(As revised by Mr. C.D. Locock.)

Melodious Arethusa, o’er my verse
Shed thou once more the spirit of thy stream:

(Two lines missing.)

Who denies verse to Gallus? So, when thou
Glidest beneath the green and purple gleam
Of Syracusan waters, mayest thou flow
Unmingled with the bitter Dorian dew!
Begin, and whilst the goats are browsing now
The soft leaves, in our song let us pursue
The melancholy loves of Gallus. List!
We sing not to the deaf: the wild woods knew
His sufferings, and their echoes answer…
Young Naiades, in what far woodlands wild
Wandered ye, when unworthy love possessed
Our Gallus? Nor where Pindus is up-piled,
Nor where Parnassus’ sacred mount, nor where
Aonian Aganippe spreads its…

(Three lines missing.)

The laurels and the myrtle-copses dim,
The pine-encircled mountain, Maenalus,
The cold crags of Lycaeus weep for him.

(Several lines missing.)

‘What madness is this, Gallus? thy heart’s care,
Lycoris, mid rude camps and Alpine snow,
With willing step pursues another there.’

(Some lines missing.)

And Sylvan, crowned with rustic coronals,
Came shaking in his speed the budding wands
And heavy lilies which he bore: we knew
Pan the Arcadian with….
…and said,
‘Wilt thou not ever cease? Love cares not.
The meadows with fresh streams, the bees with thyme,
The goats with the green leaves of budding spring
Are saturated not — nor Love with tears.’

FROM VERGIL'S FOURTH GEORGIC.

(VERSES 360 ET SEQ.)

(Published by Locock, "Examination", etc., 1903.)

And the cloven waters like a chasm of mountains
Stood, and received him in its mighty portal
And led him through the deep's untrampled fountains

He went in wonder through the path immortal
Of his great Mother and her humid reign
And groves profaned not by the step of mortal

Which sounded as he passed, and lakes which rain
Replenished not girt round by marble caves
'Wildered by the watery motion of the main

Half 'wildered he beheld the bursting waves
Of every stream beneath the mighty earth
Phasis and Lycus which the … sand paves,

(And) The chasm where old Enipeus has its birth
And father Tyber and Anienas*(?)* glow
And whence Caicus, Mysian stream, comes forth

And rock-resounding Hypanis, and thou
Eridanus who bearest like empire's sign
Two golden horns upon thy taurine brow

Thou than whom none of the streams divine
Through garden-fields and meads with fiercer power,
Burst in their tumult on the purple brine

SONNET. DANTE ALIGHIERI TO GUIDO CAVALCANTI

FROM THE ITALIAN OF DANTE.

(Published with "Alastor", 1816; reprinted, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.)

DANTE ALIGHIERI TO GUIDO CAVALCANTI:

Guido, I would that Lapo, thou, and I,
Led by some strong enchantment, might ascend
A magic ship, whose charmed sails should fly
With winds at will where'er our thoughts might wend,
So that no change, nor any evil chance
Should mar our joyous voyage; but it might be,
That even satiety should still enhance
Between our hearts their strict community:
And that the bounteous wizard then would place
Vanna and Bice and my gentle love,
Companions of our wandering, and would grace
With passionate talk, wherever we might rove,
Our time, and each were as content and free
As I believe that thou and I should be.

5 So 1824; And 1816.

THE FIRST CANZONE OF THE CONVITO.

FROM THE ITALIAN OF DANTE.

(Published by Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862; dated 1820.)

1.
Ye who intelligent the Third Heaven move,
Hear the discourse which is within my heart,
Which cannot be declared, it seems so new.
The Heaven whose course follows your power and art,
Oh, gentle creatures that ye are! me drew,
And therefore may I dare to speak to you,
Even of the life which now I live — and yet
I pray that ye will hear me when I cry,
And tell of mine own heart this novelty;
How the lamenting Spirit moans in it,
And how a voice there murmurs against her
Who came on the refulgence of your sphere.

2.
A sweet Thought, which was once the life within
This heavy heart, man a time and oft
Went up before our Father's feet, and there
It saw a glorious Lady throned aloft;
And its sweet talk of her my soul did win,
So that I said, 'Thither I too will fare.'
That Thought is fled, and one doth now appear
Which tyrannizes me with such fierce stress,
That my heart trembles — ye may see it leap —
And on another Lady bids me keep
Mine eyes, and says — Who would have blessedness
Let him but look upon that Lady's eyes,
Let him not fear the agony of sighs.

3.
This lowly Thought, which once would talk with me

Of a bright seraph sitting crowned on high,
Found such a cruel foe it died, and so
My Spirit wept, the grief is hot even now —
And said, Alas for me! how swift could flee
That piteous Thought which did my life console!
And the afflicted one … questioning
Mine eyes, if such a Lady saw they never,
And why they would…
I said: 'Beneath those eyes might stand for ever
He whom … regards must kill with…
To have known their power stood me in little stead,
Those eyes have looked on me, and I am dead.'

4.
'Thou art not dead, but thou hast wandered,
Thou Soul of ours, who thyself dost fret,'
A Spirit of gentle Love beside me said;
For that fair Lady, whom thou dost regret,
Hath so transformed the life which thou hast led,
Thou scornest it, so worthless art thou made.
And see how meek, how pitiful, how staid,
Yet courteous, in her majesty she is.
And still call thou her Woman in thy thought;
Her whom, if thou thyself deceivest not,
Thou wilt behold decked with such loveliness,
That thou wilt cry *(Love)* only Lord, lo! here
Thy handmaiden, do what thou wilt with her.

5.
My song, I fear that thou wilt find but few
Who fitly shall conceive thy reasoning
Of such hard matter dost thou entertain.
Whence, if by misadventure chance should bring
Thee to base company, as chance may do,
Quite unaware of what thou dost contain,
I prithee comfort thy sweet self again,

My last delight; tell them that they are dull,
And bid them own that thou art beautiful.

MATILDA GATHERING FLOWERS.

FROM THE PURGATORIO OF DANTE, CANTO 28, LINES 1-51.

(Published in part (lines 1-8, 22-51) by Medwin, "The Angler in Wales", 1834, "Life of Shelley", 1847; reprinted in full by Garnett, "Relics of Shelley", 1862.)

And earnest to explore within — around —
The divine wood, whose thick green living woof
Tempered the young day to the sight — I wound

Up the green slope, beneath the forest's roof,
With slow, soft steps leaving the mountain's steep,
And sought those inmost labyrinths, motion-proof

Against the air, that in that stillness deep
And solemn, struck upon my forehead bare,
The slow, soft stroke of a continuous…

In which the … leaves tremblingly were
All bent towards that part where earliest
The sacred hill obscures the morning air.

Yet were they not so shaken from the rest,
But that the birds, perched on the utmost spray,
Incessantly renewing their blithe quest,

With perfect joy received the early day,
Singing within the glancing leaves, whose sound
Kept a low burden to their roundelay,

Such as from bough to bough gathers around
The pine forest on bleak Chiassi's shore,
When Aeolus Sirocco has unbound.

My slow steps had already borne me o’er
Such space within the antique wood, that I
Perceived not where I entered any more, —

When, lo! a stream whose little waves went by,
Bending towards the left through grass that grew
Upon its bank, impeded suddenly

My going on. Water of purest hue
On earth, would appear turbid and impure
Compared with this, whose unconcealing dew,

Dark, dark, yet clear, moved under the obscure
Eternal shades, whose interwoven looms
The rays of moon or sunlight ne’er endure.

I moved not with my feet, but mid the glooms
Pierced with my charmed eye, contemplating
The mighty multitude of fresh May blooms

Which starred that night, when, even as a thing
That suddenly, for blank astonishment,
Charms every sense, and makes all thought take wing, —

A solitary woman! and she went
Singing and gathering flower after flower,
With which her way was painted and besprent.

‘Bright lady, who, if looks had ever power
To bear true witness of the heart within,
Dost bask under the beams of love, come lower

Towards this bank. I prithee let me win
This much of thee, to come, that I may hear
Thy song: like Proserpine, in Enna’s glen,

Thou seemest to my fancy, singing here
And gathering flowers, as that fair maiden when

She lost the Spring, and Ceres her, more dear.

FRAGMENT ADAPTED FROM THE VITA NUOVA OF DANTE.

(Published by Forman, "Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1876.)

What Mary is when she a little smiles
I cannot even tell or call to mind,
It is a miracle so new, so rare.

UGOLINO.

(Published by Medwin, "Life of Shelley", 1847, with Shelley's corrections in italics *(")*. — ED.)

INFERNO 33, 22-75.

(Translated by Medwin and corrected by Shelley.)

Now had the loophole of that dungeon, still
Which bears the name of Famine's Tower from me,
And where 'tis fit that many another will

Be doomed to linger in captivity,
Shown through its narrow opening in my cell
'Moon after moon slow waning', when a sleep,

'That of the future burst the veil, in dream
Visited me. It was a slumber deep
And evil; for I saw, or I did seem'

To see, 'that' tyrant Lord his revels keep
The leader of the cruel hunt to them,
Chasing the wolf and wolf-cubs up the steep

Ascent, that from 'the Pisan is the screen'
Of 'Lucca'; with him Gualandi came,
Sismondi, and Lanfranchi, 'bloodhounds lean,

Trained to the sport and eager for the game
Wide ranging in his front;' but soon were seen
Though by so short a course, with 'spirits tame,'

The father and 'his whelps' to flag at once,
And then the sharp fangs gored their bosoms deep.
Ere morn I roused myself, and heard my sons,

For they were with me, moaning in their sleep,
And begging bread. Ah, for those darling ones!
Right cruel art thou, if thou dost not weep

In thinking of my soul's sad augury;
And if thou weepest not now, weep never more!
They were already waked, as wont drew nigh

The allotted hour for food, and in that hour
Each drew a presage from his dream. When I
'Heard locked beneath me of that horrible tower

The outlet; then into their eyes alone
I looked to read myself,' without a sign
Or word. I wept not — turned within to stone.

They wept aloud, and little Anselm mine,
Said—'twas my youngest, dearest little one, —
"What ails thee, father? Why look so at thine?"

In all that day, and all the following night,
I wept not, nor replied; but when to shine
Upon the world, not us, came forth the light

Of the new sun, and thwart my prison thrown
Gleamed through its narrow chink, a doleful sight,
'Three faces, each the reflex of my own,

Were imaged by its faint and ghastly ray;'
Then I, of either hand unto the bone,

Gnawed, in my agony; and thinking they

Twas done from sudden pangs, in their excess,
All of a sudden raise themselves, and say,
“Father! our woes, so great, were yet the less

Would you but eat of us, — twas ‘you who clad
Our bodies in these weeds of wretchedness;
Despoil them’.” Not to make their hearts more sad,

I ‘hushed’ myself. That day is at its close, —
Another — still we were all mute. Oh, had
The obdurate earth opened to end our woes!

The fourth day dawned, and when the new sun shone,
Outstretched himself before me as it rose
My Gaddo, saying, “Help, father! hast thou none

For thine own child — is there no help from thee?”
He died — there at my feet — and one by one,
I saw them fall, plainly as you see me.

Between the fifth and sixth day, ere twas dawn,
I found ‘myself blind-groping o’er the three.’
Three days I called them after they were gone.

Famine of grief can get the mastery.

SONNET FROM THE ITALIAN OF CAVALCANTI.

GUIDO CAVALCANTI TO DANTE ALIGHIERI:

(Published by Forman (who assigns it to 1815), "Poetical Works of P. B. S.", 1876.)

Returning from its daily quest, my Spirit
Changed thoughts and vile in thee doth weep to find:
It grieves me that thy mild and gentle mind
Those ample virtues which it did inherit
Has lost. Once thou didst loathe the multitude
Of blind and madding men — I then loved thee —
I loved thy lofty songs and that sweet mood
When thou wert faithful to thyself and me
I dare not now through thy degraded state
Own the delight thy strains inspire — in vain
I seek what once thou wert — we cannot meet
And we were wont. Again and yet again
Ponder my words: so the false Spirit shall fly
And leave to thee thy true integrity.

SCENES FROM THE MAGICO PRODIGIOSO.

FROM THE SPANISH OF CALDERON.

(Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824; dated March, 1822. There is a transcript of Scene 1 among the Hunt manuscripts, which has been collated by Mr. Buxton Forman.)

SCENE 1:

ENTER CYPRIAN, DRESSED AS A STUDENT; CLARIN AND MOSCON AS POOR SCHOLARS, WITH BOOKS.

CYPRIAN:
In the sweet solitude of this calm place,
This intricate wild wilderness of trees
And flowers and undergrowth of odorous plants,
Leave me; the books you brought out of the house
To me are ever best society.
And while with glorious festival and song,
Antioch now celebrates the consecration
Of a proud temple to great Jupiter,
And bears his image in loud jubilee
To its new shrine, I would consume what still
Lives of the dying day in studious thought,
Far from the throng and turmoil. You, my friends,
Go, and enjoy the festival; it will
Be worth your pains. You may return for me
When the sun seeks its grave among the billows
Which, among dim gray clouds on the horizon,
Dance like white plumes upon a hearse; — and here
I shall expect you.

MOSCON:
I cannot bring my mind,
Great as my haste to see the festival
Certainly is, to leave you, Sir, without

Just saying some three or four thousand words.
How is it possible that on a day
Of such festivity, you can be content
To come forth to a solitary country
With three or four old books, and turn your back
On all this mirth?

CLARIN:
My master's in the right;
There is not anything more tiresome
Than a procession day, with troops, and priests,
And dances, and all that.

MOSCON:
From first to last,
Clarin, you are a temporizing flatterer;
You praise not what you feel but what he does; —
Toadeater!

CLARIN:
You lie — under a mistake —
For this is the most civil sort of lie
That can be given to a man's face. I now
Say what I think.

CYPRIAN:
Enough, you foolish fellows!
Puffed up with your own doting ignorance,
You always take the two sides of one question.
Now go; and as I said, return for me
When night falls, veiling in its shadows wide
This glorious fabric of the universe.

MOSCON:
How happens it, although you can maintain
The folly of enjoying festivals,
That yet you go there?

CLARIN:
Nay, the consequence
Is clear: — who ever did what he advises
Others to do? —

MOSCON:
Would that my feet were wings,
So would I fly to Livia.

(EXIT.)

CLARIN:
To speak truth,
Livia is she who has surprised my heart;
But he is more than half-way there. — Soho!
Livia, I come; good sport, Livia, soho!

(EXIT.)

CYPRIAN:
Now, since I am alone, let me examine
The question which has long disturbed my mind
With doubt, since first I read in Plinius
The words of mystic import and deep sense
In which he defines God. My intellect
Can find no God with whom these marks and signs
Fitly agree. It is a hidden truth
Which I must fathom.

(CYPRIAN READS; THE DAEMON, DRESSED IN A COURT DRESS, ENTERS.)

DAEMON:
Search even as thou wilt,
But thou shalt never find what I can hide.

CYPRIAN:
What noise is that among the boughs? Who moves?

What art thou? —

DAEMON:
‘Tis a foreign gentleman.
Even from this morning I have lost my way
In this wild place; and my poor horse at last,
Quite overcome, has stretched himself upon
The enamelled tapestry of this mossy mountain,
And feeds and rests at the same time. I was
Upon my way to Antioch upon business
Of some importance, but wrapped up in cares
(Who is exempt from this inheritance?)
I parted from my company, and lost
My way, and lost my servants and my comrades.

CYPRIAN:
‘Tis singular that even within the sight
Of the high towers of Antioch you could lose
Your way. Of all the avenues and green paths
Of this wild wood there is not one but leads,
As to its centre, to the walls of Antioch;
Take which you will, you cannot miss your road.

DAEMON:
And such is ignorance! Even in the sight
Of knowledge, it can draw no profit from it.
But as it still is early, and as I
Have no acquaintances in Antioch,
Being a stranger there, I will even wait
The few surviving hours of the day,
Until the night shall conquer it. I see
Both by your dress and by the books in which
You find delight and company, that you
Are a great student; — for my part, I feel
Much sympathy in such pursuits.

CYPRIAN:
Have you

Studied much?

DAEMON:
No, — and yet I know enough
Not to be wholly ignorant.

CYPRIAN:
Pray, Sir,
What science may you know? —

DAEMON:
Many.

CYPRIAN:
Alas!
Much pains must we expend on one alone,
And even then attain it not; — but you
Have the presumption to assert that you
Know many without study.

DAEMON:
And with truth.
For in the country whence I come the sciences
Require no learning, — they are known.

CYPRIAN:
Oh, would
I were of that bright country! for in this
The more we study, we the more discover
Our ignorance.

DAEMON:
It is so true, that I
Had so much arrogance as to oppose
The chair of the most high Professorship,
And obtained many votes, and, though I lost,
The attempt was still more glorious, than the failure
Could be dishonourable. If you believe not,

Let us refer it to dispute respecting
That which you know the best, and although I
Know not the opinion you maintain, and though
It be the true one, I will take the contrary.

CYPRIAN:
The offer gives me pleasure. I am now
Debating with myself upon a passage
Of Plinius, and my mind is racked with doubt
To understand and know who is the God
Of whom he speaks.

DAEMON:
It is a passage, if
I recollect it right, couched in these words
'God is one supreme goodness, one pure essence,
One substance, and one sense, all sight, all hands.'

CYPRIAN:
'Tis true.

DAEMON:
What difficulty find you here?

CYPRIAN:
I do not recognize among the Gods
The God defined by Plinius; if he must
Be supreme goodness, even Jupiter
Is not supremely good; because we see
His deeds are evil, and his attributes
Tainted with mortal weakness; in what manner
Can supreme goodness be consistent with
The passions of humanity?

DAEMON:
The wisdom
Of the old world masked with the names of Gods

The attributes of Nature and of Man;
A sort of popular philosophy.

CYPRIAN:
This reply will not satisfy me, for
Such awe is due to the high name of God
That ill should never be imputed. Then,
Examining the question with more care,
It follows, that the Gods would always will
That which is best, were they supremely good.
How then does one will one thing, one another?
And that you may not say that I allege
Poetical or philosophic learning: —
Consider the ambiguous responses
Of their oracular statues; from two shrines
Two armies shall obtain the assurance of
One victory. Is it not indisputable
That two contending wills can never lead
To the same end? And, being opposite,
If one be good, is not the other evil?
Evil in God is inconceivable;
But supreme goodness fails among the Gods
Without their union.

DAEMON:
I deny your major.
These responses are means towards some end
Unfathomed by our intellectual beam.
They are the work of Providence, and more
The battle's loss may profit those who lose,
Than victory advantage those who win.

CYPRIAN:
That I admit; and yet that God should not
(Falsehood is incompatible with deity)
Assure the victory; it would be enough
To have permitted the defeat. If God

Be all sight, — God, who had beheld the truth,
Would not have given assurance of an end
Never to be accomplished: thus, although
The Deity may according to his attributes
Be well distinguished into persons, yet
Even in the minutest circumstance
His essence must be one.

DAEMON:
To attain the end
The affections of the actors in the scene
Must have been thus influenced by his voice.

CYPRIAN:
But for a purpose thus subordinate
He might have employed Genii, good or evil, —
A sort of spirits called so by the learned,
Who roam about inspiring good or evil,
And from whose influence and existence we
May well infer our immortality.
Thus God might easily, without descent
To a gross falsehood in his proper person,
Have moved the affections by this mediation
To the just point.

DAEMON:
These trifling contradictions
Do not suffice to impugn the unity
Of the high Gods; in things of great importance
They still appear unanimous; consider
That glorious fabric, man, — his workmanship
Is stamped with one conception.

CYPRIAN:
Who made man
Must have, methinks, the advantage of the others.
If they are equal, might they not have risen
In opposition to the work, and being

All hands, according to our author here,
Have still destroyed even as the other made?
If equal in their power, unequal only
In opportunity, which of the two
Will remain conqueror?

DAEMON:
On impossible
And false hypothesis there can be built
No argument. Say, what do you infer
From this?

CYPRIAN:
That there must be a mighty God
Of supreme goodness and of highest grace,
All sight, all hands, all truth, infallible,
Without an equal and without a rival,
The cause of all things and the effect of nothing,
One power, one will, one substance, and one essence.
And, in whatever persons, one or two,
His attributes may be distinguished, one
Sovereign power, one solitary essence,
One cause of all cause.

(THEY RISE.)

DAEMON:
How can I impugn
So clear a consequence?

CYPRIAN:
Do you regret
My victory?

DAEMON:
Who but regrets a check
In rivalry of wit? I could reply
And urge new difficulties, but will now

Depart, for I hear steps of men approaching,
And it is time that I should now pursue
My journey to the city.

CYPRIAN:
Go in peace!

DAEMON:
Remain in peace! — Since thus it profits him
To study, I will wrap his senses up
In sweet oblivion of all thought but of
A piece of excellent beauty; and, as I
Have power given me to wage enmity
Against Justina's soul, I will extract
From one effect two vengeances.

(ASIDE AND EXIT.)

CYPRIAN:
I never
Met a more learned person. Let me now
Revolve this doubt again with careful mind.

(HE READS.)

(FLORO AND LELIO ENTER.)

LELIO:
Here stop. These toppling rocks and tangled boughs,
Impenetrable by the noonday beam,
Shall be sole witnesses of what we —

FLORO:
Draw!
If there were words, here is the place for deeds.

LELIO:
Thou needest not instruct me; well I know

That in the field, the silent tongue of steel
Speaks thus, —

(THEY FIGHT.)

CYPRIAN:
Ha! what is this? Lelio, — Floro,
Be it enough that Cyprian stands between you,
Although unarmed.

LELIO:
Whence comest thou, to stand
Between me and my vengeance?

FLORO:
From what rocks
And desert cells?

(ENTER MOSCON AND CLARIN.)

MOSCON:
Run! run! for where we left
My master. I now hear the clash of swords.

CLARIN:
I never run to approach things of this sort
But only to avoid them. Sir! Cyprian! sir!

CYPRIAN:
Be silent, fellows! What! two friends who are
In blood and fame the eyes and hope of Antioch,
One of the noble race of the Colalti,
The other son o' the Governor, adventure
And cast away, on some slight cause no doubt,
Two lives, the honour of their country?

LELIO:
Cyprian!

Although my high respect towards your person
Holds now my sword suspended, thou canst not
Restore it to the slumber of the scabbard:
Thou knowest more of science than the duel;
For when two men of honour take the field,
No counsel nor respect can make them friends
But one must die in the dispute.

FLORO:
I pray
That you depart hence with your people, and
Leave us to finish what we have begun
Without advantage. —

CYPRIAN:
Though you may imagine
That I know little of the laws of duel,
Which vanity and valour instituted,
You are in error. By my birth I am
Held no less than yourselves to know the limits
Of honour and of infamy, nor has study
Quenched the free spirit which first ordered them;
And thus to me, as one well experienced
In the false quicksands of the sea of honour,
You may refer the merits of the case;
And if I should perceive in your relation
That either has the right to satisfaction
From the other, I give you my word of honour
To leave you.

LELIO:
Under this condition then
I will relate the cause, and you will cede
And must confess the impossibility
Of compromise; for the same lady is
Beloved by Floro and myself.

FLORO:
It seems
Much to me that the light of day should look
Upon that idol of my heart — but he —
Leave us to fight, according to thy word.

CYPRIAN:
Permit one question further: is the lady
Impossible to hope or not?

LELIO:
She is
So excellent, that if the light of day
Should excite Floro's jealousy, it were
Without just cause, for even the light of day
Trembles to gaze on her.

CYPRIAN:
Would you for your
Part, marry her?

FLORO:
Such is my confidence.

CYPRIAN:
And you?

LELIO:
Oh! would that I could lift my hope
So high, for though she is extremely poor,
Her virtue is her dowry.

CYPRIAN:
And if you both
Would marry her, is it not weak and vain,
Culpable and unworthy, thus beforehand
To slur her honour? What would the world say

If one should slay the other, and if she
Should afterwards espouse the murderer?

(THE RIVALS AGREE TO REFER THEIR QUARREL TO CYPRIAN; WHO IN CONSEQUENCE VISITS JUSTINA, AND BECOMES ENAMOURED OF HER; SHE DISDAINS HIM, AND HE RETIRES TO A SOLITARY SEA-SHORE.)

SCENE 2.

CYPRIAN:
O memory! permit it not
That the tyrant of my thought
Be another soul that still
Holds dominion o'er the will,
That would refuse, but can no more,
To bend, to tremble, and adore.
Vain idolatry! — I saw,
And gazing, became blind with error;
Weak ambition, which the awe
Of her presence bound to terror!
So beautiful she was — and I,
Between my love and jealousy,
Am so convulsed with hope and fear,
Unworthy as it may appear; —
So bitter is the life I live,
That, hear me, Hell! I now would give
To thy most detested spirit
My soul, for ever to inherit,
To suffer punishment and pine,
So this woman may be mine.
Hear'st thou, Hell! dost thou reject it?
My soul is offered!

DAEMON (UNSEEN):
I accept it.

(TEMPEST, WITH THUNDER AND LIGHTNING.)

CYPRIAN:
What is this? ye heavens for ever pure,
At once intensely radiant and obscure!
Athwart the aethereal halls
The lightning's arrow and the thunder-balls
The day affright,
As from the horizon round,
Burst with earthquake sound,
In mighty torrents the electric fountains; —
Clouds quench the sun, and thunder-smoke
Strangles the air, and fire eclipses Heaven.
Philosophy, thou canst not even
Compel their causes underneath thy yoke:
From yonder clouds even to the waves below
The fragments of a single ruin choke
Imagination's flight;
For, on flakes of surge, like feathers light,
The ashes of the desolation, cast
Upon the gloomy blast,
Tell of the footsteps of the storm;
And nearer, see, the melancholy form
Of a great ship, the outcast of the sea,
Drives miserably!
And it must fly the pity of the port,
Or perish, and its last and sole resort
Is its own raging enemy.
The terror of the thrilling cry
Was a fatal prophecy
Of coming death, who hovers now
Upon that shattered prow,
That they who die not may be dying still.
And not alone the insane elements
Are populous with wild portents,
But that sad ship is as a miracle
Of sudden ruin, for it drives so fast
It seems as if it had arrayed its form
With the headlong storm.

It strikes — I almost feel the shock, —
It stumbles on a jagged rock, —
Sparkles of blood on the white foam are cast.

(A TEMPEST.)

ALL EXCLAIM *(WITHIN)*:
We are all lost!

DAEMON *(WITHIN)*:
Now from this plank will I
Pass to the land and thus fulfil my scheme.

CYPRIAN:
As in contempt of the elemental rage
A man comes forth in safety, while the ship's
Great form is in a watery eclipse
Obliterated from the Oceans page,
And round its wreck the huge sea-monsters sit,
A horrid conclave, and the whistling wave
Is heaped over its carcase, like a grave.

(THE DAEMON ENTERS, AS ESCAPED FROM THE SEA.)

DAEMON *(ASIDE)*:
It was essential to my purposes
To wake a tumult on the sapphire ocean,
That in this unknown form I might at length
Wipe out the blot of the discomfiture
Sustained upon the mountain, and assail
With a new war the soul of Cyprian,
Forging the instruments of his destruction
Even from his love and from his wisdom. — O
Beloved earth, dear mother, in thy bosom
I seek a refuge from the monster who
Precipitates itself upon me.

CYPRIAN:
Friend,
Collect thyself; and be the memory
Of thy late suffering, and thy greatest sorrow
But as a shadow of the past, — for nothing
Beneath the circle of the moon, but flows
And changes, and can never know repose.

DAEMON:
And who art thou, before whose feet my fate
Has prostrated me?

CYPRIAN:
One who, moved with pity,
Would soothe its stings.

DAEMON:
Oh, that can never be!
No solace can my lasting sorrows find.

CYPRIAN:
Wherefore?

DAEMON:
Because my happiness is lost.
Yet I lament what has long ceased to be
The object of desire or memory,
And my life is not life.

CYPRIAN:
Now, since the fury
Of this earthquaking hurricane is still,
And the crystalline Heaven has reassumed
Its windless calm so quickly, that it seems
As if its heavy wrath had been awakened
Only to overwhelm that vessel, — speak,
Who art thou, and whence comest thou?

DAEMON:
Far more
My coming hither cost, than thou hast seen
Or I can tell. Among my misadventures
This shipwreck is the least. Wilt thou hear?

CYPRIAN:
Speak.

DAEMON:
Since thou desirest, I will then unveil
Myself to thee; — for in myself I am
A world of happiness and misery;
This I have lost, and that I must lament
Forever. In my attributes I stood
So high and so heroically great,
In lineage so supreme, and with a genius
Which penetrated with a glance the world
Beneath my feet, that, won by my high merit,
A king — whom I may call the King of kings,
Because all others tremble in their pride
Before the terrors of His countenance,
In His high palace roofed with brightest gems
Of living light — call them the stars of Heaven —
Named me His counsellor. But the high praise
Stung me with pride and envy, and I rose
In mighty competition, to ascend
His seat and place my foot triumphantly
Upon His subject thrones. Chastised, I know
The depth to which ambition falls; too mad
Was the attempt, and yet more mad were now
Repentance of the irrevocable deed: —
Therefore I chose this ruin, with the glory
Of not to be subdued, before the shame
Of reconciling me with Him who reigns
By coward cession. — Nor was I alone,
Nor am I now, nor shall I be alone;

And there was hope, and there may still be hope,
For many suffrages among His vassals
Hailed me their lord and king, and many still
Are mine, and many more, perchance shall be.
Thus vanquished, though in fact victorious,
I left His seat of empire, from mine eye
Shooting forth poisonous lightning, while my words
With inauspicious thunderings shook Heaven,
Proclaiming vengeance, public as my wrong,
And imprecating on His prostrate slaves
Rapine, and death, and outrage. Then I sailed
Over the mighty fabric of the world, —
A pirate ambushed in its pathless sands,
A lynx crouched watchfully among its caves
And craggy shores; and I have wandered over
The expanse of these wide wildernesses
In this great ship, whose bulk is now dissolved
In the light breathings of the invisible wind,
And which the sea has made a dustless ruin,
Seeking ever a mountain, through whose forests
I seek a man, whom I must now compel
To keep his word with me. I came arrayed
In tempest, and although my power could well
Bridle the forest winds in their career,
For other causes I forbore to soothe
Their fury to Favonian gentleness;
I could and would not;
(ASIDE.)
(thus I wake in him
A love of magic art). Let not this tempest,
Nor the succeeding calm excite thy wonder;
For by my art the sun would turn as pale
As his weak sister with unwonted fear;
And in my wisdom are the orbs of Heaven
Written as in a record; I have pierced
The flaming circles of their wondrous spheres
And know them as thou knowest every corner

Of this dim spot. Let it not seem to thee
That I boast vainly; wouldst thou that I work
A charm over this waste and savage wood,
This Babylon of crags and aged trees,
Filling its leafy coverts with a horror
Thrilling and strange? I am the friendless guest
Of these wild oaks and pines — and as from thee
I have received the hospitality
Of this rude place, I offer thee the fruit
Of years of toil in recompense; whate'er
Thy wildest dream presented to thy thought
As object of desire, that shall be thine.

…

And thenceforth shall so firm an amity
'Twixt thee and me be, that neither Fortune,
The monstrous phantom which pursues success,
That careful miser, that free prodigal,
Who ever alternates, with changeful hand,
Evil and good, reproach and fame; nor Time,
That lodestar of the ages, to whose beam
The winged years speed o'er the intervals
Of their unequal revolutions; nor
Heaven itself, whose beautiful bright stars
Rule and adorn the world, can ever make
The least division between thee and me,
Since now I find a refuge in thy favour.

SCENE 3.

THE DAEMON TEMPTS JUSTINA, WHO IS A CHRISTIAN.

DAEMON:
Abyss of Hell! I call on thee,
Thou wild misrule of thine own anarchy!
From thy prison-house set free
The spirits of voluptuous death,

That with their mighty breath
They may destroy a world of virgin thoughts;
Let her chaste mind with fancies thick as motes
Be peopled from thy shadowy deep,
Till her guiltless fantasy
Full to overflowing be!
And with sweetest harmony,
Let birds, and flowers, and leaves, and all things move
To love, only to love.
Let nothing meet her eyes
But signs of Love's soft victories;
Let nothing meet her ear
But sounds of Love's sweet sorrow,
So that from faith no succour she may borrow,
But, guided by my spirit blind
And in a magic snare entwined,
She may now seek Cyprian.
Begin, while I in silence bind
My voice, when thy sweet song thou hast began.

A VOICE *(WITHIN)*:
What is the glory far above
All else in human life?

ALL:
Love! love!

(WHILE THESE WORDS ARE SUNG, THE DAEMON GOES OUT AT ONE DOOR, AND JUSTINA ENTERS AT ANOTHER.)

THE FIRST VOICE:
There is no form in which the fire
Of love its traces has impressed not.
Man lives far more in love's desire
Than by life's breath, soon possessed not.
If all that lives must love or die,
All shapes on earth, or sea, or sky,

With one consent to Heaven cry
That the glory far above
All else in life is —

ALL:
Love! oh, Love!

JUSTINA:
Thou melancholy Thought which art
So flattering and so sweet, to thee
When did I give the liberty
Thus to afflict my heart?
What is the cause of this new Power
Which doth my fevered being move,
Momently raging more and more?
What subtle Pain is kindled now
Which from my heart doth overflow
Into my senses? —

ALL:
Love! oh, Love!

JUSTINA:
‘Tis that enamoured Nightingale
Who gives me the reply;
He ever tells the same soft tale
Of passion and of constancy
To his mate, who rapt and fond,
Listening sits, a bough beyond.

Be silent, Nightingale — no more
Make me think, in hearing thee
Thus tenderly thy love deplore,
If a bird can feel his so,
What a man would feel for me.
And, voluptuous Vine, O thou
Who seekest most when least pursuing, —
To the trunk thou interlacest

Art the verdure which embracest,
And the weight which is its ruin, —
No more, with green embraces, Vine,
Make me think on what thou lovest, —
For whilst thus thy boughs entwine
I fear lest thou shouldst teach me, sophist,
How arms might be entangled too.

Light-enchanted Sunflower, thou
Who gazest ever true and tender
On the sun's revolving splendour!
Follow not his faithless glance
With thy faded countenance,
Nor teach my beating heart to fear,
If leaves can mourn without a tear,
How eyes must weep! O Nightingale,
Cease from thy enamoured tale, —
Leafy Vine, unwreathe thy bower,
Restless Sunflower, cease to move, —
Or tell me all, what poisonous Power
Ye use against me —

ALL:
Love! Love! Love!

JUSTINA:
It cannot be! — Whom have I ever loved?
Trophies of my oblivion and disdain,
Floro and Lelio did I not reject?
And Cyprian? —
(SHE BECOMES TROUBLED AT THE NAME OF CYPRIAN.)
Did I not requite him
With such severity, that he has fled
Where none has ever heard of him again? —
Alas! I now begin to fear that this
May be the occasion whence desire grows bold,
As if there were no danger. From the moment

That I pronounced to my own listening heart,
‘Cyprian is absent!’ — O me miserable!
I know not what I feel!
(MORE CALMLY.)
It must be pity
To think that such a man, whom all the world
Admired, should be forgot by all the world,
And I the cause.
(SHE AGAIN BECOMES TROUBLED.)
And yet if it were pity,
Floro and Lelio might have equal share,
For they are both imprisoned for my sake.
(CALMLY.)
Alas! what reasonings are these? it is
Enough I pity him, and that, in vain,
Without this ceremonious subtlety.
And, woe is me! I know not where to find him now,
Even should I seek him through this wide world.

(ENTER DAEMON.)

DAEMON:
Follow, and I will lead thee where he is.

JUSTINA:
And who art thou, who hast found entrance hither,
Into my chamber through the doors and locks?
Art thou a monstrous shadow which my madness
Has formed in the idle air?

DAEMON:
No. I am one
Called by the Thought which tyrannizes thee
From his eternal dwelling; who this day
Is pledged to bear thee unto Cyprian.

JUSTINA:
So shall thy promise fail. This agony

Of passion which afflicts my heart and soul
May sweep imagination in its storm;
The will is firm.

DAEMON:
Already half is done
In the imagination of an act.
The sin incurred, the pleasure then remains;
Let not the will stop half-way on the road.

JUSTINA:
I will not be discouraged, nor despair,
Although I thought it, and although ‘tis true
That thought is but a prelude to the deed: —
Thought is not in my power, but action is:
I will not move my foot to follow thee.

DAEMON:
But a far mightier wisdom than thine own
Exerts itself within thee, with such power
Compelling thee to that which it inclines
That it shall force thy step; how wilt thou then
Resist, Justina?

JUSTINA:
By my free-will.

DAEMON:
I
Must force thy will.

JUSTINA:
It is invincible;
It were not free if thou hadst power upon it.

(HE DRAWS, BUT CANNOT MOVE HER.)

DAEMON:
Come, where a pleasure waits thee.

JUSTINA:
It were bought
Too dear.

DAEMON:
‘Twill soothe thy heart to softest peace.

JUSTINA:
‘Tis dread captivity.

DAEMON:
‘Tis joy, ‘tis glory.

JUSTINA:
‘Tis shame, ‘tis torment, ‘tis despair.

DAEMON:
But how
Canst thou defend thyself from that or me,
If my power drags thee onward?

JUSTINA:
My defence
Consists in God.

(HE VAINLY ENDEAVOURS TO FORCE HER, AND AT LAST RELEASES HER.)

DAEMON:
Woman, thou hast subdued me,
Only by not owning thyself subdued.
But since thou thus findest defence in God,
I will assume a feigned form, and thus
Make thee a victim of my baffled rage.
For I will mask a spirit in thy form

Who will betray thy name to infamy,
And doubly shall I triumph in thy loss,
First by dishonouring thee, and then by turning
False pleasure to true ignominy.

(EXIT.)

JUSTINA: I
Appeal to Heaven against thee; so that Heaven
May scatter thy delusions, and the blot
Upon my fame vanish in idle thought,
Even as flame dies in the envious air,
And as the floweret wanes at morning frost;
And thou shouldst never — But, alas! to whom
Do I still speak? — Did not a man but now
Stand here before me? — No, I am alone,
And yet I saw him. Is he gone so quickly?
Or can the heated mind engender shapes
From its own fear? Some terrible and strange
Peril is near. Lisander! father! lord!
Livia! —

(ENTER LISANDER AND LIVIA.)

LISANDER:
Oh, my daughter! What?

LIVIA:
What!

JUSTINA:
Saw you
A man go forth from my apartment now? —
I scarce contain myself!

LISANDER:
A man here!

JUSTINA:
Have you not seen him?

LIVIA:
No, Lady.

JUSTINA: I saw him.

LISANDER: ‘Tis impossible; the doors
Which led to this apartment were all locked.

LIVIA *(ASIDE)*:
I daresay it was Moscon whom she saw,
For he was locked up in my room.

LISANDER:
It must
Have been some image of thy fantasy.
Such melancholy as thou feedest is
Skilful in forming such in the vain air
Out of the motes and atoms of the day.

LIVIA:
My master’s in the right.

JUSTINA:
Oh, would it were
Delusion; but I fear some greater ill.
I feel as if out of my bleeding bosom
My heart was torn in fragments; ay,
Some mortal spell is wrought against my frame;
So potent was the charm that, had not God
Shielded my humble innocence from wrong,
I should have sought my sorrow and my shame
With willing steps. — Livia, quick, bring my cloak,
For I must seek refuge from these extremes
Even in the temple of the highest God
Where secretly the faithful worship.

LIVIA:
Here.

JUSTINA *(PUTTING ON HER CLOAK)*:
In this, as in a shroud of snow, may I
Quench the consuming fire in which I burn,
Wasting away!

LISANDER:
And I will go with thee.

LIVIA:
When I once see them safe out of the house
I shall breathe freely.

JUSTINA:
So do I confide
In thy just favour, Heaven!

LISANDER:
Let us go.

JUSTINA:
Thine is the cause, great God! turn for my sake,
And for Thine own, mercifully to me!

STANZAS FROM CALDERON'S CISMA DE INGLATERRA.

TRANSLATED BY MEDWIN AND CORRECTED BY SHELLEY.

(Published by Medwin, "Life of Shelley", 1847, with Shelley's corrections in ".)

1.
Hast thou not seen, officious with delight,
Move through the illumined air about the flower
The Bee, that fears to drink its purple light,
Lest danger lurk within that Rose's bower?
Hast thou not marked the moth's enamoured flight
About the Taper's flame at evening hour;
'Till kindle in that monumental fire
His sunflower wings their own funereal pyre?

2.
My heart, its wishes trembling to unfold.
Thus round the Rose and Taper hovering came,
'And Passion's slave, Distrust, in ashes cold.
Smothered awhile, but could not quench the flame,' —
Till Love, that grows by disappointment bold,
And Opportunity, had conquered Shame;
And like the Bee and Moth, in act to close,
'I burned my wings, and settled on the Rose.'

SCENES FROM THE FAUST OF GOETHE.

(Published in part (Scene 2) in "The Liberal", No. 1, 1822; in full, by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824.)

SCENE 1. — PROLOGUE IN HEAVEN.

THE LORD AND THE HOST OF HEAVEN.

ENTER THREE ARCHANGELS.

RAPHAEL:
The sun makes music as of old
Amid the rival spheres of Heaven,
On its predestined circle rolled
With thunder speed: the Angels even
Draw strength from gazing on its glance,
Though none its meaning fathom may: —
The world's unwithered countenance
Is bright as at Creation's day.

GABRIEL:
And swift and swift, with rapid lightness,
The adorned Earth spins silently,
Alternating Elysian brightness
With deep and dreadful night; the sea
Foams in broad billows from the deep
Up to the rocks, and rocks and Ocean,
Onward, with spheres which never sleep,
Are hurried in eternal motion.

MICHAEL:
And tempests in contention roar
From land to sea, from sea to land;
And, raging, weave a chain of power,
Which girds the earth, as with a band. —
A flashing desolation there,

Flames before the thunder's way;
But Thy servants, Lord, revere
The gentle changes of Thy day.

CHORUS OF THE THREE:
The Angels draw strength from Thy glance,
Though no one comprehend Thee may; —
Thy world's unwithered countenance
Is bright as on Creation's day.

GABRIEL:
And swift, and inconceivably swift
The adornment of earth winds itself round,
And exchanges Paradise-clearness
With deep dreadful night.
The sea foams in broad waves
From its deep bottom, up to the rocks,
And rocks and sea are torn on together
In the eternal swift course of the spheres.

MICHAEL:
And storms roar in emulation
From sea to land, from land to sea,
And make, raging, a chain
Of deepest operation round about.
There flames a flashing destruction
Before the path of the thunderbolt.
But Thy servants, Lord, revere
The gentle alternations of Thy day.

CHORUS:
Thy countenance gives the Angels strength,
Though none can comprehend Thee:
And all Thy lofty works
Are excellent as at the first day.

Such is a literal translation of this astonishing chorus; it is impossible to represent in another language the melody of the versification; even the

volatile strength and delicacy of the ideas escape in the crucible of translation, and the reader is surprised to find a caput mortuum. — *(SHELLEY'S (ENTER MEPHISTOPHELES.)*

MEPHISTOPHELES:
As thou, O Lord, once more art kind enough
To interest Thyself in our affairs,
And ask, 'How goes it with you there below?'
And as indulgently at other times
Thou tookest not my visits in ill part,
Thou seest me here once more among Thy household.
Though I should scandalize this company,
You will excuse me if I do not talk
In the high style which they think fashionable;
My pathos certainly would make You laugh too,
Had You not long since given over laughing.
Nothing know I to say of suns and worlds;
I observe only how men plague themselves; —
The little god o' the world keeps the same stamp,
As wonderful as on creation's day: —
A little better would he live, hadst Thou
Not given him a glimpse of Heaven's light
Which he calls reason, and employs it only
To live more beastlily than any beast.
With reverence to Your Lordship be it spoken,
He's like one of those long-legged grasshoppers,
Who flits and jumps about, and sings for ever
The same old song i' the grass. There let him lie,
Burying his nose in every heap of dung.

THE LORD:
Have you no more to say? Do you come here
Always to scold, and cavil, and complain?
Seems nothing ever right to you on earth?

MEPHISTOPHELES:
No, Lord! I find all there, as ever, bad at best.

Even I am sorry for man's days of sorrow;
I could myself almost give up the pleasure
Of plaguing the poor things.

THE LORD:
Knowest thou Faust?

MEPHISTOPHELES:
The Doctor?

THE LORD:
Ay; My servant Faust.

MEPHISTOPHELES:
In truth
He serves You in a fashion quite his own;
And the fool's meat and drink are not of earth.
His aspirations bear him on so far
That he is half aware of his own folly,
For he demands from Heaven its fairest star,
And from the earth the highest joy it bears,
Yet all things far, and all things near, are vain
To calm the deep emotions of his breast.

THE LORD:
Though he now serves Me in a cloud of error,
I will soon lead him forth to the clear day.
When trees look green, full well the gardener knows
That fruits and blooms will deck the coming year.

MEPHISTOPHELES:
What will You bet? — now am sure of winning —
Only, observe You give me full permission
To lead him softly on my path.

THE LORD:
As long
As he shall live upon the earth, so long

Is nothing unto thee forbidden — Man
Must err till he has ceased to struggle.

MEPHISTOPHELES:
Thanks.
And that is all I ask; for willingly
I never make acquaintance with the dead.
The full fresh cheeks of youth are food for me,
And if a corpse knocks, I am not at home.
For I am like a cat — I like to play
A little with the mouse before I eat it.

THE LORD:
Well, well! it is permitted thee. Draw thou
His spirit from its springs; as thou find'st power
Seize him and lead him on thy downward path;
And stand ashamed when failure teaches thee
That a good man, even in his darkest longings,
Is well aware of the right way.

MEPHISTOPHELES:
Well and good.
I am not in much doubt about my bet,
And if I lose, then 'tis Your turn to crow;
Enjoy Your triumph then with a full breast.
Ay; dust shall he devour, and that with pleasure,
Like my old paramour, the famous Snake.

THE LORD:
Pray come here when it suits you; for I never
Had much dislike for people of your sort.
And, among all the Spirits who rebelled,
The knave was ever the least tedious to Me.
The active spirit of man soon sleeps, and soon
He seeks unbroken quiet; therefore I
Have given him the Devil for a companion,
Who may provoke him to some sort of work,
And must create forever. — But ye, pure

Children of God, enjoy eternal beauty; —
Let that which ever operates and lives
Clasp you within the limits of its love;
And seize with sweet and melancholy thoughts
The floating phantoms of its loveliness.

(HEAVEN CLOSES; THE ARCHANGELS EXEUNT.)

MEPHISTOPHELES:
From time to time I visit the old fellow,
And I take care to keep on good terms with Him.
Civil enough is the same God Almighty,
To talk so freely with the Devil himself.

SCENE 2. — MAY-DAY NIGHT.

THE HARTZ MOUNTAIN, A DESOLATE COUNTRY.

FAUST, MEPHISTOPHELES.

MEPHISTOPHELES:
Would you not like a broomstick? As for me
I wish I had a good stout ram to ride;
For we are still far from the appointed place.

FAUST:
This knotted staff is help enough for me,
Whilst I feel fresh upon my legs. What good
Is there in making short a pleasant way?
To creep along the labyrinths of the vales,
And climb those rocks, where ever-babbling springs,
Precipitate themselves in waterfalls,
Is the true sport that seasons such a path.
Already Spring kindles the birchen spray,
And the hoar pines already feel her breath:
Shall she not work also within our limbs?

MEPHISTOPHELES:
Nothing of such an influence do I feel.
My body is all wintry, and I wish
The flowers upon our path were frost and snow.
But see how melancholy rises now,
Dimly uplifting her belated beam,
The blank unwelcome round of the red moon,
And gives so bad a light, that every step
One stumbles ‘gainst some crag. With your permission,
I’ll call on Ignis-fatuus to our aid:
I see one yonder burning jollily.
Halloo, my friend! may I request that you
Would favour us with your bright company?
Why should you blaze away there to no purpose?
Pray be so good as light us up this way.

IGNIS-FATUUS:
With reverence be it spoken, I will try
To overcome the lightness of my nature;
Our course, you know, is generally zigzag.

MEPHISTOPHELES:
Ha, ha! your worship thinks you have to deal
With men. Go straight on, in the Devil’s name,
Or I shall puff your flickering life out.

IGNIS-FATUUS:
Well,
I see you are the master of the house;
I will accommodate myself to you.
Only consider that to-night this mountain
Is all enchanted, and if Jack-a-lantern
Shows you his way, though you should miss your own,
You ought not to be too exact with him.

FAUST, MEPHISTOPHELES, AND IGNIS-FATUUS, IN ALTERNATE CHORUS:
The limits of the sphere of dream,

The bounds of true and false, are past.
Lead us on, thou wandering Gleam,
Lead us onward, far and fast,
To the wide, the desert waste.

But see, how swift advance and shift
Trees behind trees, row by row, —
How, clift by clift, rocks bend and lift
Their frowning foreheads as we go.
The giant-snouted crags, ho! ho!
How they snort, and how they blow!

Through the mossy sods and stones,
Stream and streamlet hurry down —
A rushing throng! A sound of song
Beneath the vault of Heaven is blown!
Sweet notes of love, the speaking tones
Of this bright day, sent down to say
That Paradise on Earth is known,
Resound around, beneath, above.
All we hope and all we love
Finds a voice in this blithe strain,
Which wakens hill and wood and rill,
And vibrates far o'er field and vale,
And which Echo, like the tale
Of old times, repeats again.

To-whoo! to-whoo! near, nearer now
The sound of song, the rushing throng!
Are the screech, the lapwing, and the jay,
All awake as if 'twere day?
See, with long legs and belly wide,
A salamander in the brake!
Every root is like a snake,
And along the loose hillside,
With strange contortions through the night,
Curls, to seize or to affright;

And, animated, strong, and many,
They dart forth polypus-antennae,
To blister with their poison spume
The wanderer. Through the dazzling gloom
The many-coloured mice, that thread
The dewy turf beneath our tread,
In troops each other's motions cross,
Through the heath and through the moss;
And, in legions intertangled,
The fire-flies flit, and swarm, and throng,
Till all the mountain depths are spangled.

Tell me, shall we go or stay?
Shall we onward? Come along!
Everything around is swept
Forward, onward, far away!
Trees and masses intercept
The sight, and wisps on every side
Are puffed up and multiplied.

MEPHISTOPHELES:
Now vigorously seize my skirt, and gain
This pinnacle of isolated crag.
One may observe with wonder from this point,
How Mammon glows among the mountains.

FAUST:
Ay —
And strangely through the solid depth below
A melancholy light, like the red dawn,
Shoots from the lowest gorge of the abyss
Of mountains, lightning hitherward: there rise
Pillars of smoke, here clouds float gently by;
Here the light burns soft as the enkindled air,
Or the illumined dust of golden flowers;
And now it glides like tender colours spreading;
And now bursts forth in fountains from the earth;

And now it winds, one torrent of broad light,
Through the far valley with a hundred veins;
And now once more within that narrow corner
Masses itself into intensest splendour.
And near us, see, sparks spring out of the ground,
Like golden sand scattered upon the darkness;
The pinnacles of that black wall of mountains
That hems us in are kindled.

MEPHISTOPHELES:
Rare: in faith!
Does not Sir Mammon gloriously illuminate
His palace for this festival? — it is
A pleasure which you had not known before.
I spy the boisterous guests already.

FAUST:
How
The children of the wind rage in the air!
With what fierce strokes they fall upon my neck!

MEPHISTOPHELES:
Cling tightly to the old ribs of the crag.
Beware! for if with them thou warrest
In their fierce flight towards the wilderness,
Their breath will sweep thee into dust, and drag
Thy body to a grave in the abyss.
A cloud thickens the night.
Hark! how the tempest crashes through the forest!
The owls fly out in strange affright;
The columns of the evergreen palaces
Are split and shattered;
The roots creak, and stretch, and groan;
And ruinously overthrown,
The trunks are crushed and shattered
By the fierce blast's unconquerable stress.
Over each other crack and crash they all

In terrible and intertangled fall;
And through the ruins of the shaken mountain
The airs hiss and howl —
It is not the voice of the fountain,
Nor the wolf in his midnight prowl.
Dost thou not hear?
Strange accents are ringing
Aloft, afar, anear?
The witches are singing!
The torrent of a raging wizard song
Streams the whole mountain along.

CHORUS OF WITCHES:
The stubble is yellow, the corn is green,
Now to the Brocken the witches go;
The mighty multitude here may be seen
Gathering, wizard and witch, below.
Sir Urian is sitting aloft in the air;
Hey over stock! and hey over stone!
‘Twixt witches and incubi, what shall be done?
Tell it who dare! tell it who dare!

A VOICE:
Upon a sow-swine, whose farrows were nine,
Old Baubo rideth alone.

CHORUS:
Honour her, to whom honour is due,
Old mother Baubo, honour to you!
An able sow, with old Baubo upon her,
Is worthy of glory, and worthy of honour!
The legion of witches is coming behind,
Darkening the night, and outspeeding the wind —

A VOICE:
Which way comest thou?

A VOICE:
Over Ilsenstein;
The owl was awake in the white moonshine;
I saw her at rest in her downy nest,
And she stared at me with her broad, bright eyne.

VOICES:
And you may now as well take your course on to Hell,
Since you ride by so fast on the headlong blast.

A VOICE:
She dropped poison upon me as I passed.
Here are the wounds —

CHORUS OF WITCHES:
Come away! come along!
The way is wide, the way is long,
But what is that for a Bedlam throng?
Stick with the prong, and scratch with the broom.
The child in the cradle lies strangled at home,
And the mother is clapping her hands. —

SEMICHORUS OF WIZARDS 1:
We glide in
Like snails when the women are all away;
And from a house once given over to sin
Woman has a thousand steps to stray.

SEMICHORUS 2:
A thousand steps must a woman take,
Where a man but a single spring will make.

VOICES ABOVE:
Come with us, come with us, from Felsensee.

VOICES BELOW:
With what joy would we fly through the upper sky!

We are washed, we are ‘nointed, stark naked are we;
But our toil and our pain are forever in vain.

BOTH CHORUSES:
The wind is still, the stars are fled,
The melancholy moon is dead;
The magic notes, like spark on spark,
Drizzle, whistling through the dark. Come away!

VOICES BELOW:
Stay, Oh, stay!

VOICES ABOVE:
Out of the crannies of the rocks
Who calls?

VOICES BELOW:
Oh, let me join your flocks!
I, three hundred years have striven
To catch your skirt and mount to Heaven, —
And still in vain. Oh, might I be
With company akin to me!

BOTH CHORUSES:
Some on a ram and some on a prong,
On poles and on broomsticks we flutter along;
Forlorn is the wight who can rise not to-night.

A HALF-WITCH BELOW:
I have been tripping this many an hour:
Are the others already so far before?
No quiet at home, and no peace abroad!
And less methinks is found by the road.

CHORUS OF WITCHES:
Come onward, away! aroint thee, aroint!
A witch to be strong must anoint — anoint —
Then every trough will be boat enough;

With a rag for a sail we can sweep through the sky,
Who flies not to-night, when means he to fly?

BOTH CHORUSES:
We cling to the skirt, and we strike on the ground;
Witch-legions thicken around and around;
Wizard-swarms cover the heath all over.

(THEY DESCEND.)

MEPHISTOPHELES:
What thronging, dashing, raging, rustling;
What whispering, babbling, hissing, bustling;
What glimmering, spurting, stinking, burning,
As Heaven and Earth were overturning.
There is a true witch element about us;
Take hold on me, or we shall be divided: —
Where are you?

FAUST *(FROM A DISTANCE)*:
Here!

MEPHISTOPHELES:
What!
I must exert my authority in the house.
Place for young Voland! pray make way, good people.
Take hold on me, doctor, an with one step
Let us escape from this unpleasant crowd:
They are too mad for people of my sort.
Just there shines a peculiar kind of light —
Something attracts me in those bushes. Come
This way: we shall slip down there in a minute.

FAUST:
Spirit of Contradiction! Well, lead on —
'Twere a wise feat indeed to wander out
Into the Brocken upon May-day night,

And then to isolate oneself in scorn,
Disgusted with the humours of the time.

MEPHISTOPHELES:
See yonder, round a many-coloured flame
A merry club is huddled altogether:
Even with such little people as sit there
One would not be alone.

FAUST:
Would that I were
Up yonder in the glow and whirling smoke,
Where the blind million rush impetuously
To meet the evil ones; there might I solve
Many a riddle that torments me.

MEPHISTOPHELES:
Yet
Many a riddle there is tied anew
Inextricably. Let the great world rage!
We will stay here safe in the quiet dwellings.
'Tis an old custom. Men have ever built
Their own small world in the great world of all.
I see young witches naked there, and old ones
Wisely attired with greater decency.
Be guided now by me, and you shall buy
A pound of pleasure with a dram of trouble.
I hear them tune their instruments — one must
Get used to this damned scraping. Come, I'll lead you
Among them; and what there you do and see,
As a fresh compact 'twixt us two shall be.
How say you now? this space is wide enough —
Look forth, you cannot see the end of it —
An hundred bonfires burn in rows, and they
Who throng around them seem innumerable:
Dancing and drinking, jabbering, making love,

And cooking, are at work. Now tell me, friend,
What is there better in the world than this?

FAUST:
In introducing us, do you assume
The character of Wizard or of Devil?

MEPHISTOPHELES:
In truth, I generally go about
In strict incognito; and yet one likes
To wear one's orders upon gala days.
I have no ribbon at my knee; but here
At home, the cloven foot is honourable.
See you that snail there? — she comes creeping up,
And with her feeling eyes hath smelt out something.
I could not, if I would, mask myself here.
Come now, we'll go about from fire to fire:
I'll be the Pimp, and you shall be the Lover.
(TO SOME OLD WOMEN, WHO ARE SITTING ROUND A HEAP OF GLIMMERING COALS.)
Old gentlewomen, what do you do out here?
You ought to be with the young rioters
Right in the thickest of the revelry —
But every one is best content at home.

General.
Who dare confide in right or a just claim?
So much as I had done for them! and now —
With women and the people 'tis the same,
Youth will stand foremost ever, — age may go
To the dark grave unhonoured.

MINISTER:
Nowadays
People assert their rights: they go too far;
But as for me, the good old times I praise;
Then we were all in all—'twas something worth

One's while to be in place and wear a star;
That was indeed the golden age on earth.

PARVENU:
We too are active, and we did and do
What we ought not, perhaps; and yet we now
Will seize, whilst all things are whirled round and round,
A spoke of Fortune's wheel, and keep our ground.

AUTHOR:
Who now can taste a treatise of deep sense
And ponderous volume? 'tis impertinence
To write what none will read, therefore will I
To please the young and thoughtless people try.

MEPHISTOPHELES *(WHO AT ONCE APPEARS TO HAVE GROWN VERY OLD)*:

I

find the people ripe for the last day,
Since I last came up to the wizard mountain;
And as my little cask runs turbid now,
So is the world drained to the dregs.

PEDLAR-WITCH:
Look here,
Gentlemen; do not hurry on so fast;
And lose the chance of a good pennyworth.
I have a pack full of the choicest wares
Of every sort, and yet in all my bundle
Is nothing like what may be found on earth;
Nothing that in a moment will make rich
Men and the world with fine malicious mischief —
There is no dagger drunk with blood; no bowl
From which consuming poison may be drained
By innocent and healthy lips; no jewel,
The price of an abandoned maiden's shame;

No sword which cuts the bond it cannot loose,
Or stabs the wearer's enemy in the back;
No —

MEPHISTOPHELES:
Gossip, you know little of these times.
What has been, has been; what is done, is past,
They shape themselves into the innovations
They breed, and innovation drags us with it.
The torrent of the crowd sweeps over us:
You think to impel, and are yourself impelled.

FAUST:
What is that yonder?

MEPHISTOPHELES:
Mark her well. It is
Lilith.

FAUST:
Who?

MEPHISTOPHELES:
Lilith, the first wife of Adam.
Beware of her fair hair, for she excels
All women in the magic of her locks;
And when she winds them round a young man's neck,
She will not ever set him free again.

FAUST:
There sit a girl and an old woman — they
Seem to be tired with pleasure and with play.

MEPHISTOPHELES:
There is no rest to-night for any one:
When one dance ends another is begun;
Come, let us to it. We shall have rare fun.

(FAUST DANCES AND SINGS WITH A GIRL, AND MEPHISTOPHELES WITH AN OLD WOMAN.)

FAUST:
I had once a lovely dream
In which I saw an apple-tree,
Where two fair apples with their gleam
To climb and taste attracted me.

THE GIRL:
She with apples you desired
From Paradise came long ago:
With you I feel that if required,
Such still within my garden grow.

…

PROCTO-PHANTASMIST:
What is this cursed multitude about?
Have we not long since proved to demonstration
That ghosts move not on ordinary feet?
But these are dancing just like men and women.

THE GIRL:
What does he want then at our ball?

FAUST:
Oh! he
Is far above us all in his conceit:
Whilst we enjoy, he reasons of enjoyment;
And any step which in our dance we tread,
If it be left out of his reckoning,
Is not to be considered as a step.
There are few things that scandalize him not:
And when you whirl round in the circle now,
As he went round the wheel in his old mill,
He says that you go wrong in all respects,

Especially if you congratulate him
Upon the strength of the resemblance.

PROCTO-PHANTASMIST:
Fly!
Vanish! Unheard-of impudence! What, still there!
In this enlightened age too, since you have been
Proved not to exist! — But this infernal brood
Will hear no reason and endure no rule.
Are we so wise, and is the POND still haunted?
How long have I been sweeping out this rubbish
Of superstition, and the world will not
Come clean with all my pains! — it is a case
Unheard of!

THE GIRL:
Then leave off teasing us so.

PROCTO-PHANTASMIST:
I tell you, spirits, to your faces now,
That I should not regret this despotism
Of spirits, but that mine can wield it not.
To-night I shall make poor work of it,
Yet I will take a round with you, and hope
Before my last step in the living dance
To beat the poet and the devil together.

MEPHISTOPHELES:
At last he will sit down in some foul puddle;
That is his way of solacing himself;
Until some leech, diverted with his gravity,
Cures him of spirits and the spirit together.
(TO FAUST, WHO HAS SECEDED FROM THE DANCE.)
Why do you let that fair girl pass from you,
Who sung so sweetly to you in the dance?

FAUST:
A red mouse in the middle of her singing

Sprung from her mouth.

MEPHISTOPHELES:
That was all right, my friend:
Be it enough that the mouse was not gray.
Do not disturb your hour of happiness
With close consideration of such trifles.

FAUST:
Then saw I —

MEPHISTOPHELES:
What?

FAUST:
Seest thou not a pale,
Fair girl, standing alone, far, far away?
She drags herself now forward with slow steps,
And seems as if she moved with shackled feet:
I cannot overcome the thought that she
Is like poor Margaret.

MEPHISTOPHELES:
Let it be — pass on —
No good can come of it — it is not well
To meet it — it is an enchanted phantom,
A lifeless idol; with its numbing look,
It freezes up the blood of man; and they
Who meet its ghastly stare are turned to stone,
Like those who saw Medusa.

FAUST:
Oh, too true!
Her eyes are like the eyes of a fresh corpse
Which no beloved hand has closed, alas!
That is the breast which Margaret yielded to me —
Those are the lovely limbs which I enjoyed!

MEPHISTOPHELES:
It is all magic, poor deluded fool!
She looks to every one like his first love.

FAUST:
Oh, what delight! what woe! I cannot turn
My looks from her sweet piteous countenance.
How strangely does a single blood-red line,
Not broader than the sharp edge of a knife,
Adorn her lovely neck!

MEPHISTOPHELES:
Ay, she can carry
Her head under her arm upon occasion;
Perseus has cut it off for her. These pleasures
End in delusion. — Gain this rising ground,
It is as airy here as in a…
And if I am not mightily deceived,
I see a theatre. — What may this mean?

ATTENDANT:
Quite a new piece, the last of seven, for ‘tis
The custom now to represent that number.
‘Tis written by a Dilettante, and
The actors who perform are Dilettanti;
Excuse me, gentlemen; but I must vanish.
I am a Dilettante curtain-lifter.

The Poems

Eton College, destined to be Shelley's longest place of residence, from 1804 to 1810

Eton College Chapel today

LIST OF POEMS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

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SONG. AH! GRASP THE DIRE DAGGER AND COUCH THE FELL SPEAR
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SONG. FIERCE ROARS THE MIDNIGHT STORM
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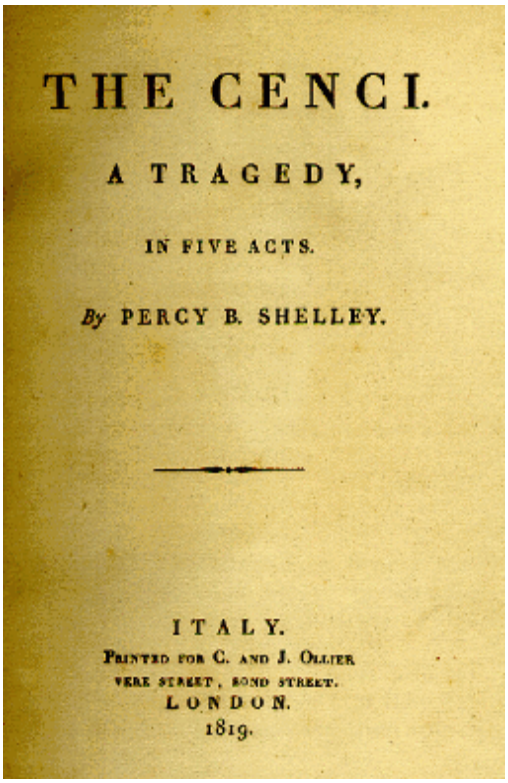
The Poetic Dramas

The Soho House, Birmingham, where Shelley attended several meetings of the Lunar Society, held by Matthew Boulton, one of Britain's leading industrialists.

THE CENCI

This five-act tragedy was written in the summer of 1819 and was inspired by the life of the Italian Beatrice Cenci. Shelley composed the play at Rome and at Villa Valsovano near Livorno, publishing it later in the same year. *The Cenci* is set in Rome in 1599, narrating how a young woman was executed for the pre-meditated murder of her tyrannical father. It was a well-known true story that had been handed down orally and documented in the *Annali d'Italia*, a twelve-volume chronicle of Italian history written by Ludovico Antonio Muratori in 1749. The events occurred during the Pontificate of Pope Clement VIII.

Shelley tried to have the drama staged, describing it as "totally different from anything you might conjecture that I should write; of a more popular kind ... written for the multitude." The playwright expressed to his publisher Charles Ollier that he was confident that the play "will succeed as a publication." However, the play was not performed in its day, most likely due to its themes of incest and parricide, and so was first performed in England as late as 1922, when it was staged in London.



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Beatrice Cenci (1577-1599) was an Italian noblewoman made famous as the protagonist of a lurid murder trial in Rome.

Introductory Note

The Cenci was Shelley's first attempt at writing drama, a form of composition for which he had conceived himself to have no talent. It was executed with greater rapidity than any of his earlier works, being begun at Rome by May 14, and finished at Leghorn, August 8, 1819, though as usual Shelley continued to revise it till it left his hands. He printed two hundred and fifty copies at an Italian press, and these were issued in the spring of 1820, at London, as the first edition. A second edition was published the following year. Shelley desired that the play should be put upon the stage, and had it offered at Covent Garden by Peacock, but it was declined on account of the subject. He thought it was written in a way to make it popular, and that the repulsive element in the story had been eliminated by the delicacy of his treatment. His interest in it lessened after its refusal by the managers; but their judgment was supported by the unfavorable impression made by it when it was privately played for the first time under the auspices of the Shelley Society, at London, in 1886.

Mrs. Shelley's note, as usual, gives nearly all that is essential to the history of the poem and of Shelley's interest in it:

'When in Rome, in 1819, a friend put into our hands the old manuscript account of the story of *The Cenci.* We visited the Colonna and Doria palaces, where the portraits of Beatrice were to be found; and her beauty cast the reflection of its own grace over her appalling story. Shelley's imagination became strongly excited, and he urged the subject to me as one fitted for a tragedy. More than ever I felt my incompetence; but I entreated him to write it instead; and he began and proceeded swiftly, urged on by intense sympathy with the sufferings of the human beings whose passions, so long cold in the tomb, he revived, and gifted with poetic language. This tragedy is the only one of his works that he communicated to me during its progress. We talked over the arrangement of the scenes together....

'We suffered a severe affliction in Rome by the loss of our eldest child, who was of such beauty and promise as to cause him deservedly to be the idol of our hearts. We left the capital of the world, anxious for a time to escape a spot associated too intimately with his presence and loss. Some friends of ours were residing in the neighborhood of Leghorn, and we took a small house, Villa Valsovano, about half-way between the town and

Monte Nero, where we remained during the summer. Our villa was situated in the midst of a *podere;* the peasants sang as they worked beneath our windows, during the heats of a very hot season, and at night the water-wheel creaked as the process of irrigation went on, and the fireflies flashed from among the myrtle hedges: — nature was bright, sunshiny, and cheerful, or diversified by storms of a majestic terror, such as we had never before witnessed.

'At the top of the house there was a sort of terrace. There is often such in Italy, generally roofed. This one was very small, yet not only roofed but glazed; this Shelley made his study; it looked out on a wide prospect of fertile country, and commanded a view of the near sea. The storms that sometimes varied our day showed themselves most picturesquely as they were driven across the ocean; sometimes the dark lurid clouds dipped towards the waves, and became water spouts, that churned up the waters beneath, as they were chased onward, and scattered by the tempest. At other times the dazzling sunlight and heat made it almost intolerable to every other; but Shelley basked in both, and his health and spirits revived under their influence. In this airy cell he wrote the principal part of *The Cenci.* He was making a study of Calderon at the time, reading his best tragedies with an accomplished lady [Mrs. Gisborne] living near us, to whom his letter from Leghorn was addressed during the following year. He admired Calderon, both for his poetry and his dramatic genius; but it shows his judgment and originality, that, though greatly struck by his first acquaintance with the Spanish poet, none of his peculiarities crept into the composition of *The Cenci;* and there is no trace of his new studies, except in that passage to which he himself alludes, as suggested by one in *El Purgatorio de San Patricio.*

'Shelley wished *The Cenci* to be acted. He was not a play-goer, being of such fastidious taste that he was easily disgusted by the bad filling up of the inferior parts. While preparing for our departure from England, however, he saw Miss O'Neil several times; she was then in the zenith of her glory, and Shelley was deeply moved by her impersonation of several parts, and by the graceful sweetness, the intense pathos, and sublime vehemence of passion she displayed. She was often in his thoughts as he wrote, and when he had finished, he became anxious that his tragedy should be acted, and receive the advantage of having this accomplished actress to fill the part of the

heroine. With this view he wrote the following letter to a friend [Peacock, July, 1819] in London: —

‘“The object of the present letter is to ask a favor of you. I have written a tragedy on the subject of a story well known in Italy, and, in my conception, eminently dramatic. I have taken some pains to make my play fit for representation, and those who have already seen it judge favorably. It is written without any of the peculiar feelings and opinions which characterize my other compositions; I having attended simply to the impartial development of such characters as it is probable the persons represented really were, together with the greatest degree of popular effect to be produced by such a development. I send you a translation of the Italian MS. on which my play is founded; the chief subject of which I have touched very delicately; for my principal doubt as to whether it would succeed, as an acting play, hangs entirely on the question, as to whether such a thing as incest in this shape, however treated, would be admitted on the stage. I think, however, it will form no objection, considering, first, that the facts are matter of history and, secondly, the peculiar delicacy with which I have treated it.

‘“I am exceedingly interested in the question of whether this attempt of mine will succeed or no. I am strongly inclined to the affirmative at present; founding my hopes on this, that as a composition it is certainly not inferior to any of the modern plays that have been acted, with the exception of *Remorse;* that the interest of its plot is incredibly greater and more real, and that there is nothing beyond what the multitude are contented to believe that they can understand, either in imagery, opinion, or sentiment. I wish to preserve a complete incognito, and can trust to you that, whatever else you do, you will at least favor me on this point. Indeed this is essential, deeply essential to its success. After it had been acted, and successfully (could I hope such a thing), I would own it if I pleased, and use the celebrity it might acquire, to my own purposes.

‘“What I want you to do, is to procure for me its presentation at Covent Garden. The principal character, Beatrice, is precisely fitted for Miss O’Neil, and it might even seem written for her, (God forbid that I should ever see her play it — it would tear my nerves to pieces,) and in all respects it is fitted only for Covent Garden. The chief male character I confess I should be very unwilling that any one but Kean should play — that is impossible, and I must be contented with an inferior actor.”

‘The play was accordingly sent to Mr. Harris. He pronounced the subject to be so objectionable that he could not even submit the part to Miss O’Neil for perusal, but expressed his desire that the author would write a tragedy on some other subject, which he would gladly accept. Shelley printed a small edition at Leghorn, to insure its correctness; as he was much annoyed by the many mistakes that crept into his text, when distance prevented him from correcting the press.

‘Universal approbation soon stamped *The Cenci* as the best tragedy of modern times. Writing concerning it, Shelley said: “I have been cautious to avoid the introducing faults of youthful composition; diffuseness, a profusion of inapplicable imagery, vagueness, generality, and, as Hamlet says, *words, words.*” There is nothing that is not purely dramatic throughout; and the character of Beatrice, proceeding from vehement struggle to horror, to deadly resolution, and lastly, to the elevated dignity of calm suffering, joined to passionate tenderness and pathos, is touched with hues so vivid and so beautiful, that the poet seems to have read intimately the secrets of the noble heart imaged in the lovely countenance of the unfortunate girl. The Fifth Act is a masterpiece. It is the finest thing he ever wrote, and may claim proud comparison not only with any contemporary, but preceding poet. The varying feelings of Beatrice are expressed with passionate, heart-reaching eloquence. Every character has a voice that echoes truth in its tones. It is curious, to one acquainted with the written story, to mark the success with which the poet has inwoven the real incidents of the tragedy into his scenes, and yet, through the power of poetry, has obliterated all that would otherwise have shown too harsh or too hideous in the picture. His success was a double triumph; and often after he was earnestly entreated to write again in a style that commanded popular favor, while it was not less instinct with truth and genius. But the bent of his mind went the other way; and even when employed on subjects whose interest depended on character and incident, he would start off in another direction, and leave the delineations of human passion, which he could depict in so able a manner, for fantastic creations of his fancy, or the expression of those opinions and sentiments with regard to human nature and its destiny, a desire to diffuse which was the master passion of his soul.’

Though Shelley’s references to the drama, in his correspondence, are many, they are rather concerned with the stage-production and publication of it than with criticism. While still warm with its composition he wrote to

Peacock, ‘My work on *The Cenci,* which was done in two months, was a fine antidote to nervous medicines and kept up, I think, the pain in my side as sticks do a fire. Since then I have materially improved;’ and in offering the dedication to Leigh Hunt, he says,—’I have written something and finished it, different from anything else, and a new attempt for me; and I mean to dedicate it to you. I should not have done so without your approbation, but I asked your picture last night, and it smiled assent. If I did not think it in some degree worthy of you, I would not make you a public offering of it. I expect to have to write to you soon about it. If Ollier is not turned Christian, Jew, or become infected with *the Murrain,* he will publish it. Don’t let him be frightened, for it is nothing which by any courtesy of language can be termed either moral or immoral.’

In letters to Ollier he describes it as ‘calculated to produce a very popular effect,’ ‘expressly written for theatrical exhibition,’ and ‘written for the multitude.’ He doubtless had in mind, while using these phrases, its restraint of style, in which it is unique among his longer works, and its freedom from abstract thought and the peculiar imagery in which he delighted. Its failure disappointed him, as it is the only one of his works from which he seems to have expected contemporary and popular success. ‘*The Cenci* ought to have been popular,’ he writes again to Ollier; and the effect of continued neglect of his writings, in depressing his spirits, is shown in a letter the preceding day to Peacock,—’Nothing is more difficult and unwelcome than to write without a confidence of finding readers; and if my play of *The Cenci* found none or few, I despair of ever producing anything that shall merit them.’ Byron was ‘loud in censure,’ and Keats was critical, in the very point where criticism was perhaps least needed; he wrote, acknowledging a gift copy, —’You, I am sure, will forgive me for sincerely remarking that you might curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist, and load every rift of your subject with ore. The thought of such discipline must fall like cold chains upon you, who perhaps never sat with your wings furled for six months together. And is not this extraordinary talk for the writer of *Endymion,* whose mind was like a pack of scattered cards?’ Trelawny records Shelley’s last, and most condensed judgment: ‘In writing *The Cenci* my object was to see how I could succeed in describing passions I have never felt, and to tell the most dreadful story in pure and refined language. The image of Beatrice haunted me after seeing her portrait. The story is well authenticated, and the details far more horrible than I have painted them. *The Cenci* is a work of

art; it is not colored by my feelings nor obscured by my metaphysics. I don't think much of it. It gave me less trouble than anything I have written of the same length.'Dedication to Leigh Hunt, Esq.

MY DEAR FRIEND, — I inscribe with your name, from a distant country, and after an absence whose months have seemed years, this the latest of my literary efforts.

Those writings which I have hitherto published have been little else than visions which impersonate my own apprehensions of the beautiful and the just. I can also perceive in them the literary defects incidental to youth and impatience; they are dreams of what ought to be or may be. The drama which I now present to you is a sad reality. I lay aside the presumptuous attitude of an instructor and am content to paint, with such colors as my own heart furnishes, that which has been.

Had I known a person more highly endowed than yourself with all that it becomes a man to possess, I had solicited for this work the ornament of his name. One more gentle, honorable, innocent and brave; one of more exalted toleration for all who do and think evil, and yet himself more free from evil; one who knows better how to receive and how to confer a benefit, though he must ever confer far more than he can receive; one of simpler, and, in the highest sense of the word, of purer life and manners, I never knew; and I had already been fortunate in friendships when your name was added to the list. In that patient and irreconcilable enmity with domestic and political tyranny and imposture which the tenor of your life has illustrated, and which, had I health and talents, should illustrate mine, let us, comforting each other in our task, live and die.

All happiness attend you!

Your affectionate friend,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

ROME, *May* 29, 1819.

Author's Preface

A MANUSCRIPT was communicated to me during my travels in Italy, which was copied from the archives of the Cenci Palace at Rome and contains a detailed account of the horrors which ended in the extinction of one of the noblest and richest families of that city, during the Pontificate of Clement VIII., in the year 1599. The story is that an old man, having spent his life in debauchery and wickedness, conceived at length an implacable hatred towards his children; which showed itself towards one daughter under the form of an incestuous passion, aggravated by every circumstance of cruelty and violence. This daughter, after long and vain attempts to escape from what she considered a perpetual contamination both of body and mind, at length plotted with her mother-in-law and brother to murder their common tyrant. The young maiden who was urged to this tremendous deed by an impulse which overpowered its horror was evidently a most gentle and amiable being, a creature formed to adorn and be admired, and thus violently thwarted from her nature by the necessity of circumstance and opinion. The deed was quickly discovered, and, in spite of the most earnest prayers made to the Pope by the highest persons in Rome, the criminals were put to death. The old man had during his life repeatedly bought his pardon from the Pope for capital crimes of the most enormous and unspeakable kind at the price of a hundred thousand crowns; the death therefore of his victims can scarcely be accounted for by the love of justice. The Pope, among other motives for severity, probably felt that whoever killed the Count Cenci deprived his treasury of a certain and copious source of revenue. Such a story, if told so as to present to the reader all the feelings of those who once acted it, their hopes and fears, their confidences and misgivings, their various interests, passions and opinions, acting upon and with each other yet all conspiring to one tremendous end, would be as a light to make apparent some of the most dark and secret caverns of the human heart.

On my arrival at Rome I found that the story of the Cenci was a subject not to be mentioned in Italian society without awakening a deep and breathless interest; and that the feelings of the company never failed to incline to a romantic pity for the wrongs and a passionate exculpation of the horrible deed to which they urged her who has been mingled two centuries

with the common dust. All ranks of people knew the outlines of this history and participated in the overwhelming interest which it seems to have the magic of exciting in the human heart. I had a copy of Guido's picture of Beatrice which is preserved in the Colonna Palace, and my servant instantly recognized it as the portrait of *La Cenci.*

This national and universal interest which the story produces and has produced for two centuries and among all ranks of people in a great City, where the imagination is kept forever active and awake, first suggested to me the conception of its fitness for a dramatic purpose. In fact it is a tragedy which has already received, from its capacity of awakening and sustaining the sympathy of men, approbation and success. Nothing remained as I imagined but to clothe it to the apprehensions of my countrymen in such language and action as would bring it home to their hearts. The deepest and the sublimest tragic compositions, King Lear and the two plays in which the tale of Oedipus is told, were stories which already existed in tradition, as matters of popular belief and interest, before Shakespeare and Sophocles made them familiar to the sympathy of all succeeding generations of mankind.

This story of the Cenci is indeed eminently fearful and monstrous; anything like a dry exhibition of it on the stage would be insupportable. The person who would treat such a subject must increase the ideal and diminish the actual horror of the events, so that the pleasure which arises from the poetry which exists in these tempestuous sufferings and crimes may mitigate the pain of the contemplation of the moral deformity from which they spring. There must also be nothing attempted to make the exhibition subservient to what is vulgarly termed a moral purpose. The highest moral purpose aimed at in the highest species of the drama is the teaching the human heart, through its sympathies and antipathies, the knowledge of itself; in proportion to the possession of which knowledge every human being is wise, just, sincere, tolerant and kind. If dogmas can do more, it is well: but a drama is no fit place for the enforcement of them. Undoubtedly no person can be truly dishonored by the act of another; and the fit return to make to the most enormous injuries is kindness and forbearance and a resolution to convert the injurer from his dark passions by peace and love. Revenge, retaliation, atonement, are pernicious mistakes. If Beatrice had thought in this manner she would have been wiser and better; but she would never have been a tragic character. The few whom such an exhibition would

have interested could never have been sufficiently interested for a dramatic purpose, from the want of finding sympathy in their interest among the mass who surround them. It is in the restless and anatomizing casuistry with which men seek the justification of Beatrice, yet feel that she has done what needs justification; it is in the superstitious horror with which they contemplate alike her wrongs and their revenge, — that the dramatic character of what she did and suffered, consists.

I have endeavored as nearly as possible to represent the characters as they probably were, and have sought to avoid the error of making them actuated by my own conceptions of right or wrong, false or true: thus under a thin veil converting names and actions of the sixteenth century into cold impersonations of my own mind. They are represented as Catholics, and as Catholics deeply tinged with religion. To a Protestant apprehension there will appear something unnatural in the earnest and perpetual sentiment of the relations between God and men which pervade the tragedy of the Cenci. It will especially be startled at the combination of an undoubting persuasion of the truth of the popular religion with a cool and determined perseverance in enormous guilt. But religion in Italy is not, as in Protestant countries, a cloak to be worn on particular days; or a passport which those who do not wish to be railed at carry with them to exhibit; or a gloomy passion for penetrating the impenetrable mysteries of our being, which terrifies its possessor at the darkness of the abyss to the brink of which it has conducted him. Religion coexists, as it were, in the mind of an Italian Catholic, with a faith in that of which all men have the most certain knowledge. It is interwoven with the whole fabric of life. It is adoration, faith, submission, penitence, blind admiration; not a rule for moral conduct. It has no necessary connection with any one virtue. The most atrocious villain may be rigidly devout, and without any shock to established faith confess himself to be so. Religion pervades intensely the whole frame of society, and is, according to the temper of the mind which it inhabits, a passion, a persuasion, an excuse, a refuge; never a check. Cenci himself built a chapel in the court of his Palace, and dedicated it to St. Thomas the Apostle, and established masses for the peace of his soul. Thus in the first scene of the fourth act Lucretia’s design in exposing herself to the consequences of an expostulation with Cenci after having administered the opiate was to induce him by a feigned tale to confess himself before death, this being esteemed by Catholics as essential to salvation; and she only relinquishes her purpose

when she perceives that her perseverance would expose Beatrice to new outrages.

I have avoided with great care in writing this play the introduction of what is commonly called mere poetry, and I imagine there will scarcely be found a detached simile or a single isolated description, unless Beatrice's description of the chasm appointed for her father's murder should be judged to be of that nature.

In a dramatic composition the imagery and the passion should interpenetrate one another, the former being reserved simply for the full development and illustration of the latter. Imagination is as the immortal God which should assume flesh for the redemption of mortal passion. It is thus that the most remote and the most familiar imagery may alike be fit for dramatic purposes when employed in the illustration of strong feeling, which raises what is low and levels to the apprehension that which is lofty, casting over all the shadow of its own greatness. In other respects I have written more carelessly; that is, without an overfastidious and learned choice of words. In this respect I entirely agree with those modern critics who assert that in order to move men to true sympathy we must use the familiar language of men, and that our great ancestors the ancient English poets are the writers, a study of whom might incite us to do that for our own age which they have done for theirs. But it must be the real language of men in general and not that of any particular class to whose society the writer happens to belong. So much for what I have attempted; I need not be assured that success is a very different matter; particularly for one whose attention has but newly been awakened to the study of dramatic literature.

I endeavored whilst at Rome to observe such monuments of this story as might be accessible to a stranger. The portrait of Beatrice at the Colonna Palace is admirable as a work of art; it was taken by Guido during her confinement in prison. But it is most interesting as a just representation of one of the loveliest specimens of the workmanship of Nature. There is a fixed and pale composure upon the features; she seems sad and stricken down in spirit, yet the despair thus expressed is lightened by the patience of gentleness. Her head is bound with folds of white drapery from which the yellow strings of her golden hair escape and fall about her neck. The moulding of her face is exquisitely delicate; the eyebrows are distinct and arched; the lips have that permanent meaning of imagination and sensibility which suffering has not repressed and which it seems as if death scarcely

could extinguish. Her forehead is large and clear; her eyes, which we are told were remarkable for their vivacity, are swollen with weeping and lustreless, but beautifully tender and serene. In the whole mien there is a simplicity and dignity which, united with her exquisite loveliness and deep sorrow, are inexpressibly pathetic. Beatrice Cenci appears to have been one of those rare persons in whom energy and gentleness dwell together without destroying one another; her nature was simple and profound. The crimes and miseries in which she was an actor and a sufferer are as the mask and the mantle in which circumstances clothed her for her impersonation on the scene of the world.

The Cenci Palace is of great extent; and, though in part modernized, there yet remains a vast and gloomy pile of feudal architecture in the same state as during the dreadful scenes which are the subject of this tragedy. The Palace is situated in an obscure corner of Rome, near the quarter of the Jews, and from the upper windows you see the immense ruins of Mount Palatine half hidden under their profuse overgrowth of trees. There is a court in one part of the Palace (perhaps that in which Cenci built the Chapel to St. Thomas), supported by granite columns and adorned with antique friezes of fine workmanship, and built up, according to the ancient Italian fashion, with balcony over balcony of openwork. One of the gates of the Palace formed of immense stones and leading through a passage, dark and lofty and opening into gloomy subterranean chambers, struck me particularly.

Of the Castle of Petrella, I could obtain no further information than that which is to be found in the manuscript.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

COUNT FRANCESCO CENCI.
GIACOMO, BERNARDO, his Sons.
CARDINAL CAMILLO.
PRINCE COLONNA.
ORSINO, a Prelate.
SAVELLA, the Pope's Legate.
OLIMPIO, MARZIO, Assassins.
ANDREA, Servant to CENCI.
NOBLES. JUDGES. GUARDS, SERVANTS.
LUCRETIA, Wife of CENCI and Stepmother of his children.
BEATRICE, his Daughter.
The SCENE lies principally in Rome, but changes during the fourth Act to Pretrella, a castle among the Apulian Apennines.
TIME. During the Pontificate of Clement VIII.

Act I

SCENE I. — *An Apartment in the* CENCI *Palace. Enter* COUNT CENCI *and* CARDINAL CAMILLO.

CAMILLO
THAT matter of the murder is hushed up
If you consent to yield his Holiness
Your fief that lies beyond the Pincian gate.
It needed all my interest in the conclave
To bend him to this point; he said that you
Bought perilous impunity with your gold;
That crimes like yours if once or twice compounded
Enriched the Church, and respited from hell
An erring soul which might repent and live;
But that the glory and the interest
Of the high throne he fills little consist
With making it a daily mart of guilt
As manifold and hideous as the deeds
Which you scarce hide from men's revolted eyes.

CENCI
The third of my possessions — let it go!
Ay, I once heard the nephew of the Pope
Had sent his architect to view the ground,
Meaning to build a villa on my vines
The next time I compounded with his uncle.
I little thought he should outwit me so!
Henceforth no witness — not the lamp — shall see
That which the vassal threatened to divulge,
Whose throat is choked with dust for his reward.
The deed he saw could not have rated higher
Than his most worthless life — it angers me!
Respited me from Hell! So may the Devil
Respite their souls from Heaven! No doubt Pope Clement,
And his most charitable nephews, pray

That the Apostle Peter and the saints
Will grant for their sake that I long enjoy
Strength, wealth, and pride, and lust, and length of days
Wherein to act the deeds which are the stewards
Of their revenue. — But much yet remains
To which they show no title.

CAMILLO
Oh, Count Cenci!
So much that thou mightst honorably live
And reconcile thyself with thine own heart
And with thy God and with the offended world.
How hideously look deeds of lust and blood
Through those snow-white and venerable hairs!
Your children should be sitting round you now
But that you fear to read upon their looks
The shame and misery you have written there.
Where is your wife? Where is your gentle daughter?
Methinks her sweet looks, which make all things else
Beauteous and glad, might kill the fiend within you.
Why is she barred from all society
But her own strange and uncomplaining wrongs?
Talk with me, Count, — you know I mean you well.
I stood beside your dark and fiery youth,
Watching its bold and bad career, as men
Watch meteors, but it vanished not; I marked
Your desperate and remorseless manhood; now
Do I behold you in dishonored age
Charged with a thousand unrepented crimes.
Yet I have ever hoped you would amend,
And in that hope have saved your life three times.

CENCI
For which Aldobrandino owes you now
My fief beyond the Pincian. Cardinal,
One thing, I pray you, recollect henceforth,
And so we shall converse with less restraint.

A man you knew spoke of my wife and daughter;
He was accustomed to frequent my house;
So the next day *his* wife and daughter came
And asked if I had seen him; and I smiled.
I think they never saw him any more.

CAMILLO
Thou execrable man, beware!

CENCI
Of thee?
Nay, this is idle. We should know each other.
As to my character for what men call crime,
Seeing I please my senses as I list,
And vindicate that right with force or guile,
It is a public matter, and I care not
If I discuss it with you. I may speak
Alike to you and my own conscious heart,
For you give out that you have half reformed me;
Therefore strong vanity will keep you silent,
If fear should not; both will, I do not doubt.
All men delight in sensual luxury;
All men enjoy revenge, and most exult
Over the tortures they can never feel,
Flattering their secret peace with others' pain.
But I delight in nothing else. I love
The sight of agony, and the sense of joy,
When this shall be another's and that mine;
And I have no remorse and little fear,
Which are, I think, the checks of other men.
This mood has grown upon me, until now
Any design my captious fancy makes
The picture of its wish — and it forms none
But such as men like you would start to know —
Is as my natural food and rest debarred
Until it be accomplished.

CAMILLO
Art thou not
Most miserable?

CENCI
Why miserable?
No. I am what your theologians call
Hardened; which they must be in impudence,
So to revile a man's peculiar taste.
True, I was happier than I am, while yet
Manhood remained to act the thing I thought, —
While lust was sweeter than revenge; and now
Invention palls. Ay, we must all grow old.
And but that there remains a deed to act
Whose horror might make sharp an appetite
Duller than mine — I 'd do, — I know not what.
When I was young I thought of nothing else
But pleasure; and I fed on honey sweets.
Men, by St. Thomas! cannot live like bees, —
And I grew tired; yet, till I killed a foe,
And heard his groans, and heard his children's groans,
Knew I not what delight was else on earth, —
Which now delights me little. I the rather
Look on such pangs as terror ill conceals —
The dry, fixed eyeball, the pale, quivering lip,
Which tell me that the spirit weeps within
Tears bitterer than the bloody sweat of Christ.
I rarely kill the body, which preserves,
Like a strong prison, the soul within my power,
Wherein I feed it with the breath of fear
For hourly pain.

CAMILLO
Hell's most abandoned fiend
Did never, in the drunkenness of guilt,
Speak to his heart as now you speak to me.
I thank my God that I believe you not.

Enter ANDREA

ANDREA
My Lord, a gentleman from Salamanca
Would speak with you.

CENCI
Bid him attend me
In the grand saloon.

[*Exit* ANDREA.

CAMILLO
Farewell; and I will pray
Almighty God that thy false, impious words
Tempt not his spirit to abandon thee.

[*Exit* CAMILLO.

CENCI
The third of my possessions! I must use
Close husbandry, or gold, the old man's sword,
Falls from my withered hand. But yesterday
There came an order from the Pope to make
Fourfold provision for my cursèd sons,
Whom I had sent from Rome to Salamanca,
Hoping some accident might cut them off,
And meaning, if I could, to starve them there.
I pray thee, God, send some quick death upon them!
Bernardo and my wife could not be worse
If dead and damned. Then, as to Beatrice —
[*Looking around him suspiciously.*
I think they cannot hear me at that door.
What if they should? And yet I need not speak,
Though the heart triumphs with itself in words.
O thou most silent air, that shalt not hear
What now I think! Thou pavement which I tread
Towards her chamber, — let your echoes talk

Of my imperious step, scorning surprise,
But not of my intent! — Andrea!

Enter ANDREA

ANDREA
My Lord?

CENCI
Bid Beatrice attend me in her chamber
This evening: — no, at midnight and alone.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. — *A Garden of the Cenci Palace. Enter* BEATRICE *and* ORSINO, *as in conversation.*

BEATRICE
Pervert not truth,
Orsino. You remember where we held
That conversation; nay, we see the spot
Even from this cypress; two long years are passed
Since, on an April midnight, underneath
The moonlight ruins of Mount Palatine,
I did confess to you my secret mind.

ORSINO
You said you loved me then.

BEATRICE
You are a priest.
Speak to me not of love.

ORSINO
I may obtain
The dispensation of the Pope to marry.
Because I am a priest do you believe
Your image, as the hunter some struck deer,
Follows me not whether I wake or sleep?

BEATRICE
As I have said, speak to me not of love;
Had you a dispensation, I have not;
Nor will I leave this home of misery
Whilst my poor Bernard, and that gentle lady
To whom I owe life and these virtuous thoughts,
Must suffer what I still have strength to share.
Alas, Orsino! All the love that once
I felt for you is turned to bitter pain.
Ours was a youthful contract, which you first
Broke by assuming vows no Pope will loose.
And thus I love you still, but holily,
Even as a sister or a spirit might;
And so I swear a cold fidelity.
And it is well perhaps we shall not marry.
You have a sly, equivocating vein
That suits me not. — Ah, wretched that I am!
Where shall I turn? Even now you look on me
As you were not my friend, and as if you
Discovered that I thought so, with false smiles
Making my true suspicion seem your wrong.
Ah, no, forgive me; sorrow makes me seem
Sterner than else my nature might have been;
I have a weight of melancholy thoughts,
And they forebode, — but what can they forebode
Worse than I now endure?

ORSINO
All will be well.
Is the petition yet prepared? You know
My zeal for all you wish, sweet Beatrice;
Doubt not but I will use my utmost skill
So that the Pope attend to your complaint.

BEATRICE
Your zeal for all I wish. Ah me, you are cold!
Your utmost skill — speak but one word —

(*Aside*) Alas!
Weak and deserted creature that I am,
Here I stand bickering with my only friend!

(*To* ORSINO)
This night my father gives a sumptuous feast,
Orsino; he has heard some happy news
From Salamanca, from my brothers there,
And with this outward show of love he mocks
His inward hate. ‘T is bold hypocrisy,
For he would gladlier celebrate their deaths,
Which I have heard him pray for on his knees.
Great God! that such a father should be mine!
But there is mighty preparation made,
And all our kin, the Cenci, will be there,
And all the chief nobility of Rome.
And he has bidden me and my pale mother
Attire ourselves in festival array.
Poor lady! she expects some happy change
In his dark spirit from this act; I none.
At supper I will give you the petition;
Till when — farewell.

ORSINO
Farewell.
[*Exit* BEATRICE.
I know the Pope
Will ne’er absolve me from my priestly vow
But by absolving me from the revenue
Of many a wealthy see; and, Beatrice,
I think to win thee at an easier rate.
Nor shall he read her eloquent petition.
He might bestow her on some poor relation
Of his sixth cousin, as he did her sister,
And I should be debarred from all access.
Then as to what she suffers from her father,
In all this there is much exaggeration.

Old men are testy, and will have their way.
A man may stab his enemy, or his vassal,
And live a free life as to wine or women,
And with a peevish temper may return
To a dull home, and rate his wife and children;
Daughters and wives call this foul tyranny.
I shall be well content if on my conscience
There rest no heavier sin than what they suffer
From the devices of my love — a net
From which he shall escape not. Yet I fear
Her subtle mind, her awe-inspiring gaze,
Whose beams anatomize me, nerve by nerve,
And lay me bare, and make me blush to see
My hidden thoughts. — Ah, no! a friendless girl
Who clings to me, as to her only hope!
I were a fool, not less than if a panther
Were panic-stricken by the antelope's eye,
If she escape me.
[*Exit.*

SCENE III. — *A magnificent Hall in the Cenci Palace. A Banquet. Enter* CENCI, LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, ORSINO, CAMILLO, NOBLES.

CENCI
Welcome, my friends and kinsmen; welcome ye,
Princes and Cardinals, pillars of the church,
Whose presence honors our festivity.
I have too long lived like an anchorite,
And in my absence from your merry meetings
An evil word is gone abroad of me;
But I do hope that you, my noble friends,
When you have shared the entertainment here,
And heard the pious cause for which 't is given,
And we have pledged a health or two together,
Will think me flesh and blood as well as you;
Sinful indeed, for Adam made all so,
But tender-hearted, meek and pitiful.

FIRST GUEST
In truth, my Lord, you seem too light of heart,
Too sprightly and companionable a man,
To act the deeds that rumor pins on you.
[*To his companion.*
I never saw such blithe and open cheer
In any eye!

SECOND GUEST
Some most desired event,
In which we all demand a common joy,
Has brought us hither; let us hear it, Count.

CENCI
It is indeed a most desired event.
If when a parent from a parent's heart
Lifts from this earth to the great Father of all
A prayer, both when he lays him down to sleep,
And when he rises up from dreaming it;
One supplication, one desire, one hope,
That he would grant a wish for his two sons,
Even all that he demands in their regard,
And suddenly beyond his dearest hope
It is accomplished, he should then rejoice,
And call his friends and kinsmen to a feast,
And task their love to grace his merriment, —
Then honor me thus far, for I am he.

BEATRICE (*to* LUCRETIA)
Great God! How horrible! some dreadful ill
Must have befallen my brothers.

LUCRETIA
Fear not, child,
He speaks too frankly.

BEATRICE
Ah! My blood runs cold.

I fear that wicked laughter round his eye,
Which wrinkles up the skin even to the hair.

CENCI
Here are the letters brought from Salamanca.
Beatrice, read them to your mother. God!
I thank thee! In one night didst thou perform,
By ways inscrutable, the thing I sought.
My disobedient and rebellious sons
Are dead! — Why, dead! — What means this change of cheer?
You hear me not — I tell you they are dead;
And they will need no food or raiment more;
The tapers that did light them the dark way
Are their last cost. The Pope, I think, will not
Expect I should maintain them in their coffins.
Rejoice with me — my heart is wondrous glad.

BEATRICE (LUCRETIA *sinks, half fainting;* BEATRICE *supports her*)
It is not true! — Dear Lady, pray look up.
Had it been true — there is a God in Heaven —
He would not live to boast of such a boon.
Unnatural man, thou knowest that it is false.

CENCI
Ay, as the word of God; whom here I call
To witness that I speak the sober truth;
And whose most favoring providence was shown
Even in the manner of their deaths. For Rocco
Was kneeling at the mass, with sixteen others,
When the church fell and crushed him to a mummy;
The rest escaped unhurt. Cristofano
Was stabbed in error by a jealous man,
Whilst she he loved was sleeping with his rival,
All in the self-same hour of the same night;
Which shows that Heaven has special care of me.
I beg those friends who love me that they mark
The day a feast upon their calendars.

It was the twenty-seventh of December.
Ay, read the letters if you doubt my oath.

[*The assembly appears confused; several of the guests rise.*

FIRST GUEST
Oh, horrible! I will depart.

SECOND GUEST
And I.

THIRD GUEST
No, stay!
I do believe it is some jest; though, faith!
‘T is mocking us somewhat too solemnly.
I think his son has married the Infanta,
Or found a mine of gold in El Dorado.
‘T is but to season some such news; stay, stay!
I see ‘t is only raillery by his smile.

CENCI (*filling a bowl of wine, and lifting it up*)
O thou bright wine, whose purple splendor leaps
And bubbles gayly in this golden bowl
Under the lamp-light, as my spirits do,
To hear the death of my accursèd sons!
Could I believe thou wert their mingled blood,
Then would I taste thee like a sacrament,
And pledge with thee the mighty Devil in Hell,
Who, if a father’s curses, as men say,
Climb with swift wings after their children’s souls,
And drag them from the very throne of Heaven,
Now triumphs in my triumph! — But thou art
Superfluous; I have drunken deep of joy,
And I will taste no other wine to-night.
Here, Andrea! Bear the bowl around.

A GUEST (*rising*)
Thou wretch!

Will none among this noble company
Check the abandoned villain?

CAMILLO
For God's sake,
Let me dismiss the guests! You are insane.
Some ill will come of this.

SECOND GUEST
Seize, silence him!

FIRST GUEST
I will!

THIRD GUEST
And I!

CENCI (*addressing those who rise with a threatening gesture*)
Who moves? Who speaks?
[*Turning to the company.*
'T is nothing,
Enjoy yourselves. — Beware! for my revenge
Is as the sealed commission of a king,
That kills, and none dare name the murderer.
[*The Banquet is broken up; several of the Guests are departing.*

BEATRICE
I do entreat you, go not, noble guests;
What although tyranny and impious hate
Stand sheltered by a father's hoary hair?
What if 't is he who clothed us in these limbs
Who tortures them, and triumphs? What, if we,
The desolate and the dead, were his own flesh,
His children and his wife, whom he is bound
To love and shelter? Shall we therefore find
No refuge in this merciless wide world?
Oh, think what deep wrongs must have blotted out
First love, then reverence, in a child's prone mind,

Till it thus vanquish shame and fear! Oh, think!
I have borne much, and kissed the sacred hand
Which crushed us to the earth, and thought its stroke
Was perhaps some paternal chastisement!
Have excused much, doubted; and when no doubt
Remained, have sought by patience, love and tears
To soften him; and when this could not be,
I have knelt down through the long sleepless nights,
And lifted up to God, the father of all,
Passionate prayers; and when these were not heard,
I have still borne, — until I meet you here,
Princes and kinsmen, at this hideous feast
Given at my brothers' deaths. Two yet remain;
His wife remains and I, whom if ye save not,
Ye may soon share such merriment again
As fathers make over their children's graves.
Oh! Prince Colonna, thou art our near kinsman;
Cardinal, thou art the Pope's chamberlain;
Camillo, thou art chief justiciary;
Take us away!

CENCI (*he has been conversing with* CAMILLO *during the first part of* BEATRICE'S *speech; he hears the conclusion, and now advances*)
I hope my good friends here
Will think of their own daughters — or perhaps
Of their own throats — before they lend an ear
To this wild girl.

BEATRICE (*not noticing the words of* CENCI)
Dare no one look on me?
None answer? Can one tyrant overbear
The sense of many best and wisest men?
Or is it that I sue not in some form
Of scrupulous law that ye deny my suit?
Oh, God! that I were buried with my brothers!
And that the flowers of this departed spring

Were fading on my grave! and that my father
Were celebrating now one feast for all!

CAMILLO
A bitter wish for one so young and gentle.
Can we do nothing? —

COLONNA
Nothing that I see
Count Cenci were a dangerous enemy;
Yet I would second any one.

A CARDINAL
And I.

CENCI
Retire to your chamber, insolent girl!

BEATRICE
Retire thou, impious man! Ay, hide thyself
Where never eye can look upon thee more!
Wouldst thou have honor and obedience,
Who art a torturer? Father, never dream,
Though thou mayst overbear this company,
But ill must come of ill. Frown not on me!
Haste, hide thyself, lest with avenging looks
My brothers' ghosts should hunt thee from thy seat!
Cover thy face from every living eye,
And start if thou but hear a human step;
Seek out some dark and silent corner — there
Bow thy white head before offended God,
And we will kneel around, and fervently
Pray that he pity both ourselves and thee.

CENCI
My friends, I do lament this insane girl
Has spoiled the mirth of our festivity.
Good night, farewell; I will not make you longer

Spectators of our dull domestic quarrels.
Another time. —
[*Exeunt all but* CENCI *and* BEATRICE.
My brain is swimming round.
Give me a bowl of wine!

(*To* BEATRICE)
Thou painted viper!
Beast that thou art! Fair and yet terrible!
I know a charm shall make thee meek and tame,
Now get thee from my sight!
[*Exit* BEATRICE.
Here, Andrea,
Fill up this goblet with Greek wine. I said
I would not drink this evening, but I must;
For, strange to say, I feel my spirits fail
With thinking what I have decreed to do.
(*Drinking the wine*)
Be thou the resolution of quick youth
Within my veins, and manhood's purpose stern,
And age's firm, cold, subtle villainy;
As if thou wert indeed my children's blood
Which I did thirst to drink! The charm works well.
It must be done; it shall be done, I swear!
[*Exit.*

Act II

SCENE I. — *An Apartment in the Cenci Palace. Enter* LUCRETIA *and* BERNARDO.

LUCRETIA
WEEP not, my gentle boy; he struck but me,
Who have borne deeper wrongs. In truth, if he
Had killed me, he had done a kinder deed.
O God Almighty, do thou look upon us,
We have no other friend but only thee!
Yet weep not; though I love you as my own,
I am not your true mother.

BERNARDO
Oh, more, more
Than ever mother was to any child,
That have you been to me! Had he not been
My father, do you think that I should weep?

LUCRETIA
Alas! poor boy, what else couldst thou have done!

Enter BEATRICE

BEATRICE (*in a hurried voice*)
Did he pass this way? Have you seen him, brother?
Ah, no! that is his step upon the stairs;
'T is nearer now; his hand is on the door;
Mother, if I to thee have ever been
A duteous child, now save me! Thou, great God,
Whose image upon earth a father is,
Dost thou indeed abandon me? He comes;
The door is opening now; I see his face;
He frowns on others, but he smiles on me,
Even as he did after the feast last night.

Enter a Servant
Almighty God, how merciful thou art!
'T is but Orsino's servant. — Well, what news?

SERVANT
My master bids me say the Holy Father
Has sent back your petition thus unopened.
(*Giving a paper*)
And he demands at what hour 't were secure
To visit you again?

LUCRETIA
At the Ave Mary.
[*Exit Servant.*
So, daughter, our last hope has failed. Ah me,
How pale you look! you tremble, and you stand
Wrapped in some fixed and fearful meditation,
As if one thought were overstrong for you;
Your eyes have a chill glare; oh, dearest child!
Are you gone mad? If not, pray speak to me.

BEATRICE
You see I am not mad; I speak to you.

LUCRETIA
You talked of something that your father did
After that dreadful feast? Could it be worse
Than when he smiled, and cried, 'My sons are dead!'
And every one looked in his neighbor's face
To see if others were as white as he?
At the first word he spoke I felt the blood
Rush to my heart, and fell into a trance;
And when it passed I sat all weak and wild;
Whilst you alone stood up, and with strong words
Checked his unnatural pride; and I could see
The devil was rebuked that lives in him.
Until this hour thus you have ever stood

Between us and your father's moody wrath
Like a protecting presence; your firm mind
Has been our only refuge and defence.
What can have thus subdued it? What can now
Have given you that cold melancholy look,
Succeeding to your unaccustomed fear?

BEATRICE
What is it that you say? I was just thinking
'T were better not to struggle any more.
Men, like my father, have been dark and bloody;
Yet never — oh! before worse comes of it,
'T were wise to die; it ends in that at last.

LUCRETIA
Oh, talk not so, dear child! Tell me at once
What did your father do or say to you?
He stayed not after that accursèd feast
One moment in your chamber. — Speak to me.

BERNARDO
Oh, sister, sister, prithee, speak to us!

BEATRICE (*speaking very slowly, with a forced calmness*)
It was one word, mother, one little word;
One look, one smile.
(*Wildly*)
Oh! he has trampled me
Under his feet, and made the blood stream down
My pallid cheeks. And he has given us all
Ditch-water, and the fever-stricken flesh
Of buffaloes, and bade us eat or starve,
And we have eaten. He has made me look
On my beloved Bernardo, when the rust
Of heavy chains has gangrened his sweet limbs;
And I have never yet despaired — but now!
What would I say?

(*Recovering herself*)
Ah no! ‘t is nothing new.
The sufferings we all share have made me wild;
He only struck and cursed me as he passed;
He said, he looked, he did, — nothing at all
Beyond his wont, yet it disordered me.
Alas! I am forgetful of my duty;
I should preserve my senses for your sake.

LUCRETIA
Nay, Beatrice; have courage, my sweet girl.
If any one despairs it should be I,
Who loved him once, and now must live with him
Till God in pity call for him or me.
For you may, like your sister, find some husband,
And smile, years hence, with children round your knees;
Whilst I, then dead, and all this hideous coil,
Shall be remembered only as a dream.

BEATRICE
Talk not to me, dear Lady, of a husband.
Did you not nurse me when my mother died?
Did you not shield me and that dearest boy?
And had we any other friend but you
In infancy, with gentle words and looks,
To win our father not to murder us?
And shall I now desert you? May the ghost
Of my dead mother plead against my soul,
If I abandon her who filled the place
She left, with more, even, than a mother’s love!

BERNARDO
And I am of my sister’s mind. Indeed
I would not leave you in this wretchedness,
Even though the Pope should make me free to live
In some blithe place, like others of my age,

With sports, and delicate food, and the fresh air.
Oh, never think that I will leave you, mother!

LUCRETIA
My dear, dear children!

Enter CENCI, *suddenly*

CENCI
What! Beatrice here!
Come hither!
[*She shrinks back, and covers her face.*
Nay, hide not your face, ‘t is fair;
Look up! Why, yesternight you dared to look
With disobedient insolence upon me,
Bending a stern and an inquiring brow
On what I meant; whilst I then sought to hide
That which I came to tell you — but in vain.

BEATRICE (*wildly staggering towards the door*)
Oh, that the earth would gape! Hide me, O God!

CENCI
Then it was I whose inarticulate words
Fell from my lips, and who with tottering steps
Fled from your presence, as you now from mine.
Stay, I command you! From this day and hour
Never again, I think, with fearless eye,
And brow superior, and unaltered cheek,
And that lip made for tenderness or scorn,
Shalt thou strike dumb the meanest of mankind;
Me least of all. Now get thee to thy chamber!
Thou too, loathed image of thy cursèd mother,

(*To BERNARDO*)
Thy milky, meek face makes me sick with hate!

[*Exeunt* BEATRICE *and* BERNARDO.
(*Aside*) So much has passed between us as must make
Me bold, her fearful.—'T is an awful thing
To touch such mischief as I now conceive;
So men sit shivering on the dewy bank
And try the chill stream with their feet; once in —
How the delighted spirit pants for joy!

LUCRETIA (*advancing timidly towards him*)
O husband! pray forgive poor Beatrice.
She meant not any ill.

CENCI
Nor you perhaps?
Nor that young imp, whom you have taught by rote
Parricide with his alphabet? nor Giacomo?
Nor those two most unnatural sons who stirred
Enmity up against me with the Pope?
Whom in one night merciful God cut off.
Innocent lambs! They thought not any ill.
You were not here conspiring? you said nothing
Of how I might be dungeoned as a madman;
Or be condemned to death for some offence,
And you would be the witnesses? This failing,
How just it were to hire assassins, or
Put sudden poison in my evening drink?
Or smother me when overcome by wine?
Seeing we had no other judge but God,
And he had sentenced me, and there were none
But you to be the executioners
Of his decree enregistered in heaven?
Oh, no! You said not this?

LUCRETIA
So help me God,
I never thought the things you charge me with!

CENCI
If you dare to speak that wicked lie again,
I ‘ll kill you. What! it was not by your counsel
That Beatrice disturbed the feast last night?
You did not hope to stir some enemies
Against me, and escape, and laugh to scorn
What every nerve of you now trembles at?
You judged that men were bolder than they are;
Few dare to stand between their grave and me.

LUCRETIA
Look not so dreadfully! By my salvation
I knew not aught that Beatrice designed;
Nor do I think she designed anything
Until she heard you talk of her dead brothers.

CENCI
Blaspheming liar! you are damned for this!
But I will take you where you may persuade
The stones you tread on to deliver you;
For men shall there be none but those who dare
All things — not question that which I command.
On Wednesday next I shall set out; you know
That savage rook, the Castle of Petrella;
‘T is safely walled, and moated round about;
Its dungeons under ground and its thick towers
Never told tales; though they have heard and seen
What might make dumb things speak. Why do you linger?
Make speediest preparation for the journey!
[*Exit* LUCRETIA.
The all-beholding sun yet shines; I hear
A busy stir of men about the streets;
I see the bright sky through the window panes.
It is a garish, broad, and peering day;
Loud, light, suspicious, full of eyes and ears;
And every little corner, nook, and hole,
Is penetrated with the insolent light.

Come, darkness! Yet, what is the day to me?
And wherefore should I wish for night, who do
A deed which shall confound both night and day?
‘T is she shall grope through a bewildering mist
Of horror; if there be a sun in heaven,
She shall not dare to look upon its beams;
Nor feel its warmth. Let her, then, wish for night;
The act I think shall soon extinguish all
For me; I bear a darker, deadlier gloom
Than the earth’s shade, or interlunar air,
Or constellations quenched in murkiest cloud,
In which I walk secure and unbeheld
Towards my purpose. — Would that it were done!
[*Exit.*

SCENE II. — *A Chamber in the Vatican. Enter* CAMILLO *and* GIACOMO, *in conversation.*

CAMILLO
There is an obsolete and doubtful law
By which you might obtain a bare provision
Of food and clothing.

GIACOMO
Nothing more? Alas!
Bare must be the provision which strict law
Awards, and aged sullen avarice pays.
Why did my father not apprentice me
To some mechanic trade? I should have then
Been trained in no highborn necessities
Which I could meet not by my daily toil.
The eldest son of a rich nobleman
Is heir to all his incapacities;
He has wide wants, and narrow powers. If you,
Cardinal Camillo, were reduced at once
From thrice-driven beds of down, and delicate food,

An hundred servants, and six palaces,
To that which nature doth indeed require? —

CAMILLO
Nay, there is reason in your plea; ‘t were hard.

GIACOMO
‘T is hard for a firm man to bear; but I
Have a dear wife, a lady of high birth,
Whose dowry in ill hour I lent my father,
Without a bond or witness to the deed;
And children, who inherit her fine senses,
The fairest creatures in this breathing world;
And she and they reproach me not. Cardinal,
Do you not think the Pope will interpose
And stretch authority beyond the law?

CAMILLO
Though your peculiar case is hard, I know
The Pope will not divert the course of law.
After that impious feast the other night
I spoke with him, and urged him then to check
Your father’s cruel hand; he frowned and said,
‘Children are disobedient, and they sting
Their fathers’ hearts to madness and despair,
Requiting years of care with contumely.
I pity the Count Cenci from my heart;
His outraged love perhaps awakened hate,
And thus he is exasperated to ill.
In the great war between the old and young,
I, who have white hairs and a tottering body,
Will keep at least blameless neutrality.’

Enter ORSINO
You, my good lord Orsino, heard those words.

ORSINO
What words?

GIACOMO
Alas, repeat them not again!
There then is no redress for me; at least
None but that which I may achieve myself,
Since I am driven to the brink. — But, say,
My innocent sister and my only brother
Are dying underneath my father's eye.
The memorable torturers of this land,
Galeaz Visconti, Borgia, Ezzelin,
Never inflicted on their meanest slave
What these endure; shall they have no protection?

CAMILLO
Why, if they would petition to the Pope,
I see not how he could refuse it; yet
He holds it of most dangerous example
In aught to weaken the paternal power,
Being, as 't were, the shadow of his own.
I pray you now excuse me. I have business
That will not bear delay.
[*Exit* CAMILLO.

GIACOMO
But you, Orsino,
Have the petition; wherefore not present it?

ORSINO
I have presented it, and backed it with
My earnest prayers and urgent interest;
It was returned unanswered. I doubt not
But that the strange and execrable deeds
Alleged in it — in truth they might well baffle
Any belief — have turned the Pope's displeasure
Upon the accusers from the criminal.
So I should guess from what Camillo said.

GIACOMO
My friend, that palace-walking devil, Gold,

Has whispered silence to His Holiness;
And we are left, as scorpions ringed with fire.
What should we do but strike ourselves to death?
For he who is our murderous persecutor
Is shielded by a father's holy name,
Or I would —
[*Stops abruptly.*

ORSINO
What? Fear not to speak your thought.
Words are but holy as the deeds they cover;
A priest who has forsworn the God he serves,
A judge who makes Truth weep at his decree,
A friend who should weave counsel, as I now,
But as the mantle of some selfish guile,
A father who is all a tyrant seems, —
Were the profaner for his sacred name.

GIACOMO
Ask me not what I think; the unwilling brain
Feigns often what it would not; and we trust
Imagination with such fantasies
As the tongue dares not fashion into words —
Which have no words, their horror makes them dim
To the mind's eye. My heart denies itself
To think what you demand.

ORSINO
But a friend's bosom
Is as the inmost cave of our own mind,
Where we sit shut from the wide gaze of day
And from the all-communicating air.
You look what I suspected —

GIACOMO
Spare me now!
I am as one lost in a midnight wood,
Who dares not ask some harmless passenger

The path across the wilderness, lest he,
As my thoughts are, should be — a murderer.
I know you are my friend, and all I dare
Speak to my soul that will I trust with thee.
But now my heart is heavy, and would take
Lone counsel from a night of sleepless care.
Pardon me that I say farewell — farewell!
I would that to my own suspected self
I could address a word so full of peace.

ORSINO
Farewell! — Be your thoughts better or more bold.
[*Exit* GIACOMO.
I had disposed the Cardinal Camillo
To feed his hope with cold encouragement.
It fortunately serves my close designs
That ‘t is a trick of this same family
To analyze their own and other minds.
Such self-anatomy shall teach the will
Dangerous secrets; for it tempts our powers,
Knowing what must be thought, and may be done,
Into the depth of darkest purposes.
So Cenci fell into the pit; even I,
Since Beatrice unveiled me to myself,
And made me shrink from what I cannot shun,
Show a poor figure to my own esteem,
To which I grow half reconciled. I ‘ll do
As little mischief as I can; that thought
Shall fee the accuser conscience.
(*After a pause*)
Now what harm
If Cenci should be murdered? — Yet, if murdered,
Wherefore by me? And what if I could take
The profit, yet omit the sin and peril
In such an action? Of all earthly things
I fear a man whose blows outspeed his words;
And such is Cenci; and, while Cenci lives,

His daughter's dowry were a secret grave
If a priest wins her. — O fair Beatrice!
Would that I loved thee not, or, loving thee,
Could but despise danger and gold and all
That frowns between my wish and its effect,
Or smiles beyond it! There is no escape;
Her bright form kneels beside me at the altar,
And follows me to the resort of men,
And fills my slumber with tumultuous dreams,
So when I wake my blood seems liquid fire;
And if I strike my damp and dizzy head,
My hot palm scorches it; her very name,
But spoken by a stranger, makes my heart
Sicken and pant; and thus unprofitably
I clasp the phantom of unfelt delights
Till weak imagination half possesses
The self-created shadow. Yet much longer
Will I not nurse this life of feverous hours.
From the unravelled hopes of Giacomo
I must work out my own dear purposes.
I see, as from a tower, the end of all:
Her father dead; her brother bound to me
By a dark secret, surer than the grave;
Her mother scared and unexpostulating
From the dread manner of her wish achieved;
And she! — Once more take courage, my faint heart;
What dares a friendless maiden matched with thee?
I have such foresight as assures success.
Some unbeheld divinity doth ever,
When dread events are near, stir up men's minds
To black suggestions; and he prospers best,
Not who becomes the instrument of ill,
But who can flatter the dark spirit that makes
Its empire and its prey of other hearts
Till it become his slave — as I will do.
[*Exit.*

Act III

SCENE I. — *An Apartment in the Cenci Palace.* LUCRETIA; *to her enter* BEATRICE.

BEATRICE (*she enters staggering and speaks wildly*)

REACH me that handkerchief! — My brain is hurt;
My eyes are full of blood; just wipe them for me —
I see but indistinctly.

LUCRETIA
My sweet child,
You have no wound; ‘t is only a cold dew
That starts from your dear brow. — Alas, alas!
What has befallen?

BEATRICE
How comes this hair undone?
Its wandering strings must be what blind me so,
And yet I tied it fast. — Oh, horrible!
The pavement sinks under my feet! The walls
Spin round! I see a woman weeping there,
And standing calm and motionless, whilst I
Slide giddily as the world reels. — My God!
The beautiful blue heaven is flecked with blood!
The sunshine on the floor is black! The air
Is changed to vapors such as the dead breathe
In charnel-pits! Pah! I am choked! There creeps
A clinging, black, contaminating mist
About me—’t is substantial, heavy, thick;
I cannot pluck it from me, for it glues
My fingers and my limbs to one another,
And eats into my sinews, and dissolves
My flesh to a pollution, poisoning
The subtle, pure, and inmost spirit of life!
My God! I never knew what the mad felt

Before; for I am mad beyond all doubt!
(*More wildly*)
No, I am dead! These putrefying limbs
Shut round and sepulchre the panting soul
Which would burst forth into the wandering air!
(*A pause*)
What hideous thought was that I had even now?
'T is gone; and yet its burden remains here
O'er these dull eyes — upon this weary heart!
O world! O life! O day! O misery!

LUCRETIA
What ails thee, my poor child? She answers not.
Her spirit apprehends the sense of pain,
But not it cause; suffering has dried away
The source from which it sprung.

BEATRICE (*frantically*)
Like Parricide —
Misery has killed its father; yet its father
Never like mine — O God! what thing am I?

LUCRETIA
My dearest child, what has your father done?

BEATRICE (*doubtfully*)
Who art thou, questioner? I have no father.
[*Aside.*
She is the madhouse nurse who tends on me,
It is a piteous office.

(*To* LUCRETIA, *in a slow, subdued voice*)
Do you know,
I thought I was that wretched Beatrice
Men speak of, whom her father sometimes hales
From hall to hall by the entangled hair;
At others, pens up naked in damp cells

Where scaly reptiles crawl, and starves her there
Till she will eat strange flesh. This woful story
So did I overact in my sick dreams
That I imagined — no, it cannot be!
Horrible things have been in this wild world,
Prodigious mixtures, and confusions strange
Of good and ill; and worse have been conceived
Than ever there was found a heart to do.
But never fancy imaged such a deed
As —
(*Pauses, suddenly recollecting herself*)
Who art thou? Swear to me, ere I die
With fearful expectation, that indeed
Thou art not what thou seemest — Mother!

LUCRETIA
Oh!
My sweet child, know you —

BEATRICE
Yet speak it not;
For then if this be truth, that other too
Must be a truth, a firm enduring truth,
Linked with each lasting circumstance of life,
Never to change, never to pass away.
Why so it is. This is the Cenci Palace;
Thou art Lucretia; I am Beatrice.
I have talked some wild words, but will no more.
Mother, come near me; from this point of time,
I am —
(*Her voice dies away faintly*)

LUCRETIA
Alas! what has befallen thee, child?
What has thy father done?

BEATRICE
What have I done?

Am I not innocent? Is it my crime
That one with white hair and imperious brow,
Who tortured me from my forgotten years
As parents only dare, should call himself
My father, yet should be! — Oh, what am I?
What name, what place, what memory shall be mine?
What retrospects, outliving even despair?

LUCRETIA
He is a violent tyrant, surely, child;
We know that death alone can make us free;
His death or ours. But what can he have done
Of deadlier outrage or worse injury?
Thou art unlike thyself; thine eyes shoot forth
A wandering and strange spirit. Speak to me,
Unlock those pallid hands whose fingers twine
With one another.

BEATRICE
‘T is the restless life
Tortured within them. If I try to speak,
I shall go mad. Ay, something must be done;
What, yet I know not — something which shall make
The thing that I have suffered but a shadow
In the dread lightning which avenges it;
Brief, rapid, irreversible, destroying
The consequence of what it cannot cure.
Some such thing is to be endured or done;
When I know what, I shall be still and calm,
And never anything will move me more.
But now! — O blood, which art my father’s blood,
Circling through these contaminated veins,
If thou, poured forth on the polluted earth,
Could wash away the crime and punishment
By which I suffer — no, that cannot be!
Many might doubt there were a God above

Who sees and permits evil, and so die;
That faith no agony shall obscure in me.

LUCRETIA
It must indeed have been some bitter wrong;
Yet what, I dare not guess. Oh, my lost child,
Hide not in proud impenetrable grief
Thy sufferings from my fear.

BEATRICE
I hide them not.
What are the words which yon would have me speak?
I, who can feign no image in my mind
Of that which has transformed me; I, whose thought
Is like a ghost shrouded and folded up
In its own formless horror — of all words,
That minister to mortal intercourse,
Which wouldst thou hear? for there is none to tell
My misery; if another ever knew
Aught like to it, she died as I will die,
And left it, as I must, without a name.
Death, death! our law and our religion call thee
A punishment and a reward; oh, which
Have I deserved?

LUCRETIA
The peace of innocence,
Till in your season you be called to heaven.
Whate'er you may have suffered, you have done
No evil. Death must be the punishment
Of crime, or the reward of trampling down
The thorns which God has strewed upon the path
Which leads to immortality.

BEATRICE
Ay, death —
The punishment of crime. I pray thee, God,
Let me not be bewildered while I judge.

If I must live day after day, and keep
These limbs, the unworthy temple of thy spirit,
As a foul den from which what thou abhorrest
May mock thee unavenged — it shall not be!
Self-murder — no, that might be no escape,
For thy decree yawns like a Hell between
Our will and it. — Oh! in this mortal world
There is no vindication and no law,
Which can adjudge and execute the doom
Of that through which I suffer.

Enter ORSINO
(*She approaches him solemnly*)
Welcome, friend!
I have to tell you that, since last we met,
I have endured a wrong so great and strange
That neither life nor death can give me rest.
Ask me not what it is, for there are deeds
Which have no form, sufferings which have no tongue.

ORSINO
And what is he who has thus injured you?

BEATRICE
The man they call my father; a dread name.

ORSINO
It cannot be —

BEATRICE
What it can be, or not,
Forbear to think. It is, and it has been;
Advise me how it shall not be again.
I thought to die; but a religious awe
Restrains me, and the dread lest death itself
Might be no refuge from the consciousness
Of what is yet unexpiated. Oh, speak!

ORSINO
Accuse him of the deed, and let the law
Avenge thee.

BEATRICE
Oh, ice-hearted counsellor!
If I could find a word that might make known
The crime of my destroyer; and that done,
My tongue should like a knife tear out the secret
Which cankers my heart's core; ay, lay all bare,
So that my unpolluted fame should be
With vilest gossips a stale mouthèd story;
A mock, a byword, an astonishment: —
If this were done, which never shall be done,
Think of the offender's gold, his dreaded hate,
And the strange horror of the accuser's tale,
Baffling belief, and overpowering speech;
Scarce whispered, unimaginable, wrapped
In hideous hints — Oh, most assured redress!

ORSINO
You will endure it then?

BEATRICE
Endure! — Orsino,
It seems your counsel is small profit.
(*Turns from him, and speaks half to herself*)
Ay,
All must be suddenly resolved and done.
What is this undistinguishable mist
Of thoughts, which rise, like shadow after shadow,
Darkening each other?

ORSINO
Should the offender live?
Triumph in his misdeed? and make, by use,
His crime, whate'er it is, dreadful no doubt,
Thine element; until thou mayest become

Utterly lost; subdued even to the hue
Of that which thou permittest?

BEATRICE (*to herself*)
Mighty death!
Thou double-visaged shadow! only judge!
Rightfullest arbiter!
(*She retires, absorbed in thought*)

LUCRETIA
If the lightning
Of God has e'er descended to avenge —

ORSINO
Blaspheme not! His high Providence commits
Its glory on this earth and their own wrongs
Into the hands of men; if they neglect
To punish crime —

LUCRETIA
But if one, like this wretch,
Should mock with gold opinion, law and power?
If there be no appeal to that which makes
The guiltiest tremble? if, because our wrongs,
For that they are unnatural, strange and monstrous,
Exceed all measure of belief? Oh, God!
If, for the very reasons which should make
Redress most swift and sure, our injurer triumphs?
And we, the victims, bear worse punishment
Than that appointed for their torturer?

ORSINO
Think not
But that there is redress where there is wrong,
So we be bold enough to seize it.

LUCRETIA
How?

If there were any way to make all sure,
I know not — but I think it might be good
To —

ORSINO
Why, his late outrage to Beatrice —
For it is such, as I but faintly guess,
As makes remorse dishonor, and leaves her
Only one duty, how she may avenge;
You, but one refuge from ills ill endured;
Me, but one counsel —

LUCRETIA
For we cannot hope
That aid, or retribution, or resource
Will arise thence, where every other one
Might find them with less need.
[BEATRICE *advances.*

ORSINO
Then —

BEATRICE
Peace, Orsino!
And, honored Lady, while I speak, I pray
That you put off, as garments overworn,
Forbearance and respect, remorse and fear,
And all the fit restraints of daily life,
Which have been borne from childhood, but which now
Would be a mockery to my holier plea.
As I have said, I have endured a wrong,
Which, though it be expressionless, is such
As asks atonement, both for what is passed,
And lest I be reserved, day after day,
To load with crimes an overburdened soul,
And be — what ye can dream not. I have prayed
To God, and I have talked with my own heart,
And have unravelled my entangled will,

And have at length determined what is right.
Art thou my friend, Orsino? False or true?
Pledge thy salvation ere I speak.

ORSINO
I swear
To dedicate my cunning, and my strength,
My silence, and whatever else is mine,
To thy commands.

LUCRETIA
You think we should devise
His death?

BEATRICE
And execute what is devised,
And suddenly. We must be brief and bold.

ORSINO
And yet most cautious.

LUCRETIA
For the jealous laws
Would punish us with death and infamy
For that which it became themselves to do.

BEATRICE
Be cautious as ye may, but prompt. Orsino,
What are the means?

ORSINO
I know two dull, fierce outlaws,
Who think man's spirit as a worm's, and they
Would trample out, for any slight caprice,
The meanest or the noblest life. This mood
Is marketable here in Rome. They sell
What we now want.

LUCRETIA
To-morrow, before dawn,
Cenci will take us to that lonely rock,
Petrella, in the Apulian Apennines.
If he arrive there —

BEATRICE
He must not arrive.

ORSINO
Will it be dark before you reach the tower?

LUCRETIA
The sun will scarce be set.

BEATRICE
But I remember
Two miles on this side of the fort the road
Crosses a deep ravine; ‘t is rough and narrow,
And winds with short turns down the precipice;
And in its depth there is a mighty rock,
Which has, from unimaginable years,
Sustained itself with terror and with toil
Over a gulf, and with the agony
With which it clings seems slowly coming down;
Even as a wretched soul hour after hour
Clings to the mass of life; yet, clinging, leans;
And, leaning, makes more dark the dread abyss
In which it fears to fall; beneath this crag
Huge as despair, as if in weariness,
The melancholy mountain yawns; below,
You hear but see not an impetuous torrent
Raging among the caverns, and a bridge
Crosses the chasm; and high above there grow,
With intersecting trunks, from crag to crag,
Cedars, and yews, and pines; whose tangled hair
Is matted in one solid roof of shade

By the dark ivy's twine. At noonday here
'T is twilight, and at sunset blackest night.

ORSINO
Before you reach that bridge make some excuse
For spurring on your mules, or loitering
Until —

BEATRICE
What sound is that?

LUCRETIA
Hark! No, it cannot be a servant's step;
It must be Cenci, unexpectedly
Returned — make some excuse for being here.

BEATRICE (*to* ORSINO *as she goes out*)
That step we hear approach must never pass
The bridge of which we spoke.
[*Exeunt* LUCRETIA *and* BEATRICE.

ORSINO
What shall I do?
Cenci must find me here, and I must bear
The imperious inquisition of his looks
As to what brought me hither; let me mask
Mine own in some inane and vacant smile.

Enter GIACOMO, *in a hurried manner*
How! have you ventured hither? know you then
That Cenci is from home?

GIACOMO
I sought him here;
And now must wait till he returns.

ORSINO
Great God!

Weigh you the danger of this rashness?

GIACOMO
Ay!
Does my destroyer know his danger? We
Are now no more, as once, parent and child,
But man to man; the oppressor to the oppressed,
The slanderer to the slandered; foe to foe.
He has cast Nature off, which was his shield,
And Nature casts him off, who is her shame;
And I spurn both. Is it a father's throat
Which I will shake, and say, I ask not gold;
I ask not happy years; nor memories
Of tranquil childhood; nor home-sheltered love;
Though all these hast thou torn from me, and more;
But only my fair fame; only one hoard
Of peace, which I thought hidden from thy hate
Under the penury heaped on me by thee;
Or I will — God can understand and pardon,
Why should I speak with man?

ORSINO
Be calm, dear friend.

GIACOMO
Well, I will calmly tell you what he did.
This old Francesco Cenci, as you know,
Borrowed the dowry of my wife from me,
And then denied the loan; and left me so
In poverty, the which I sought to mend
By holding a poor office in the state.
It had been promised to me, and already
I bought new clothing for my ragged babes,
And my wife smiled; and my heart knew repose;
When Cenci's intercession, as I found,
Conferred this office on a wretch, whom thus
He paid for vilest service. I returned

With this ill news, and we sate sad together
Solacing our despondency with tears
Of such affection and unbroken faith
As temper life's worst bitterness; when he,
As he is wont, came to upbraid and curse,
Mocking our poverty, and telling us
Such was God's scourge for disobedient sons.
And then, that I might strike him dumb with shame,
I spoke of my wife's dowry; but he coined
A brief yet specious tale, how I had wasted
The sum in secret riot; and he saw
My wife was touched, and he went smiling forth.
And when I knew the impression he had made,
And felt my wife insult with silent scorn
My ardent truth, and look averse and cold,
I went forth too; but soon returned again;
Yet not so soon but that my wife had taught
My children her harsh thoughts, and they all cried,
'Give us clothes, father! Give us better food!
What you in one night squander were enough
For months!' I looked, and saw that home was hell.
And to that hell will I return no more,
Until mine enemy has rendered up
Atonement, or, as he gave life to me,
I will, reversing Nature's law —

ORSINO
Trust me,
The compensation which thou seekest here
Will be denied.

GIACOMO
Then — Are you not my friend?
Did you not hint at the alternative,
Upon the brink of which you see I stand,
The other day when we conversed together?

My wrongs were then less. That word, parricide,
Although I am resolved, haunts me like fear.

ORSINO
It must be fear itself, for the bare word
Is hollow mockery. Mark how wisest God
Draws to one point the threads of a just doom,
So sanctifying it; what you devise
Is, as it were, accomplished.

GIACOMO
Is he dead?

ORSINO
His grave is ready. Know that since we met
Cenci has done an outrage to his daughter.

GIACOMO
What outrage?

ORSINO
That she speaks not, but you may
Conceive such half conjectures as I do
From her fixed paleness, and the lofty grief
Of her stern brow, bent on the idle air,
And her severe unmodulated voice,
Drowning both tenderness and dread; and last
From this; that whilst her step-mother and I,
Bewildered in our horror, talked together
With obscure hints, both self-misunderstood,
And darkly guessing, stumbling, in our talk,
Over the truth and yet to its revenge,
She interrupted us, and with a look
Which told, before she spoke it, he must die —

GIACOMO
It is enough. My doubts are well appeased;
There is a higher reason for the act

Than mine; there is a holier judge than me,
A more unblamed avenger. Beatrice,
Who in the gentleness of thy sweet youth
Hast never trodden on a worm, or bruised
A living flower, but thou hast pitied it
With needless tears! fair sister, thou in whom
Men wondered how such loveliness and wisdom
Did not destroy each other! is there made
Ravage of thee? O heart, I ask no more
Justification! Shall I wait, Orsino,
Till he return, and stab him at the door?

ORSINO
Not so, some accident might interpose
To rescue him from what is now most sure;
And you are unprovided where to fly,
How to excuse or to conceal. Nay, listen;
All is contrived; success is so assured
That —
Enter BEATRICE

BEATRICE
‘T is my brother’s voice! You know me not?

GIACOMO
My sister, my lost sister!

BEATRICE
Lost indeed!
I see Orsino has talked with you, and
That you conjecture things too horrible
To speak, yet far less than the truth. Now stay not,
He might return; yet kiss me; I shall know
That then thou hast consented to his death.
Farewell, farewell! Let piety to God,
Brotherly love, justice and clemency,
And all things that make tender hardest hearts,

Make thine hard, brother. Answer not — farewell.
[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE II. — *A mean Apartment in* GIACOMO'S *House.* GIACOMO *alone.*

GIACOMO
'T is midnight, and Orsino comes not yet.
(*Thunder, and the sound of a storm*)
What! can the everlasting elements
Feel with a worm like man? If so, the shaft
Of mercy-wingèd lightning would not fall
On stones and trees. My wife and children sleep;
They are now living in unmeaning dreams;
But I must wake, still doubting if that deed
Be just which was most necessary. Oh,
Thou unreplenished lamp, whose narrow fire
Is shaken by the wind, and on whose edge
Devouring darkness hovers! thou small flame,
Which, as a dying pulse rises and falls,
Still flickerest up and down, how very soon,
Did I not feed thee, wouldst thou fail and be
As thou hadst never been! So wastes and sinks
Even now, perhaps, the life that kindled mine;
But that no power can fill with vital oil, —
That broken lamp of flesh. Ha! 't is the blood
Which fed these veins that ebbs till all is cold;
It is the form that moulded mine that sinks
Into the white and yellow spasms of death;
It is the soul by which mine was arrayed
In God's immortal likeness which now stands
Naked before Heaven's judgment-seat!
(*A bell strikes*)
One! Two!
The hours crawl on; and, when my hairs are white,
My son will then perhaps be waiting thus,
Tortured between just hate and vain remorse;

Chiding the tardy messenger of news
Like those which I expect. I almost wish
He be not dead, although my wrongs are great;
Yet—'t is Orsino's step.

Enter ORSINO
Speak!

ORSINO
I am come
To say he has escaped.

GIACOMO
Escaped!

ORSINO
And safe
Within Petrella. He passed by the spot
Appointed for the deed an hour too soon.

GIACOMO
Are we the fools of such contingencies?
And do we waste in blind misgivings thus
The hours when we should act? Then wind and thunder,
Which seemed to howl his knell, is the loud laughter
With which Heaven mocks our weakness! I henceforth
Will ne'er repent of aught designed or done,
But my repentance.

ORSINO
See, the lamp is out.

GIACOMO
If no remorse is ours when the dim air
Has drunk this innocent flame, why should we quail
When Cenci's life, that light by which ill spirits
See the worst deeds they prompt, shall sink forever?
No, I am hardened.

ORSINO
Why, what need of this?
Who feared the pale intrusion of remorse
In a just deed? Although our first plan failed,
Doubt not but he will soon be laid to rest.
But light the lamp; let us not talk i' the dark.

GIACOMO (*lighting the lamp*)
And yet, once quenched, I cannot thus relume
My father's life; do you not think his ghost
Might plead that argument with God?

ORSINO
Once gone,
You cannot now recall your sister's peace;
Your own extinguished years of youth and hope;
Nor your wife's bitter words; nor all the taunts
Which, from the prosperous, weak misfortune takes;
Nor your dead mother; nor —

GIACOMO
Oh, speak no more!
I am resolved, although this very hand
Must quench the life that animated it.

ORSINO
There is no need of that. Listen; you know
Olimpio, the castellan of Petrella
In old Colonna's time; him whom your father
Degraded from his post? And Marzio,
That desperate wretch, whom he deprived last year
Of a reward of blood, well earned and due?

GIACOMO
I knew Olimpio; and they say he hated
Old Cenci so, that in his silent rage
His lips grew white only to see him pass.
Of Marzio I know nothing.

ORSINO
Marzio's hate
Matches Olimpio's. I have sent these men,
But in your name, and as at your request,
To talk with Beatrice and Lucretia.

GIACOMO
Only to talk?

ORSINO
The moments which even now
Pass onward to to-morrow's midnight hour
May memorize their flight with death; ere then
They must have talked, and may perhaps have done,
And made an end.

GIACOMO
Listen! What sound is that?

ORSINO
The house-dog moans, and the beams crack; nought else.

GIACOMO
It is my wife complaining in her sleep;
I doubt not she is saying bitter things
Of me; and all my children round her dreaming
That I deny them sustenance.

ORSINO
Whilst he
Who truly took it from them, and who fills
Their hungry rest with bitterness, now sleeps
Lapped in bad pleasures, and triumphantly
Mocks thee in visions of successful hate
Too like the truth of day.

GIACOMO
If e'er he wakes

Again, I will not trust to hireling hands —

ORSINO
Why, that were well. I must be gone; good night!
When next we meet, may all be done!

GIACOMO
And all
Forgotten! Oh, that I had never been!
[*Exeunt.*

Act IV

SCENE I. — *An Apartment in the Castle of Petrella. Enter* CENCI.

CENCI
SHE comes not; yet I left her even now
Vanquished and faint. She knows the penalty
Of her delay; yet what if threats are vain?
Am I not now within Petrella's moat?
Or fear I still the eyes and ears of Rome?
Might I not drag her by the golden hair?
Stamp on her? keep her sleepless till her brain
Be overworn? tame her with chains and famine?
Less would suffice. Yet so to leave undone
What I most seek! No, 't is her stubborn will,
Which, by its own consent, shall stoop as low
As that which drags it down.

Enter LUCRETIA
Thou loathèd wretch!
Hide thee from my abhorrence; fly, begone!
Yet stay! Bid Beatrice come hither.

LUCRETIA
Oh,
Husband! I pray, for thine own wretched sake,
Heed what thou dost. A man who walks like thee
Through crimes, and through the danger of his crimes,
Each hour may stumble o'er a sudden grave.
And thou art old; thy hairs are hoary gray;
As thou wouldst save thyself from death and hell,
Pity thy daughter; give her to some friend
In marriage; so that she may tempt thee not
To hatred, or worse thoughts, if worse there be.

CENCI
What! like her sister, who has found a home

To mock my hate from with prosperity?
Strange ruin shall destroy both her and thee,
And all that yet remain. My death may be
Rapid, her destiny outspeeds it. Go,
Bid her come hither, and before my mood
Be changed, lest I should drag her by the hair.

LUCRETIA
She sent me to thee, husband. At thy presence
She fell, as thou dost know, into a trance;
And in that trance she heard a voice which said,
'Cenci must die! Let him confess himself!
Even now the accusing Angel waits to hear
If God, to punish his enormous crimes,
Harden his dying heart!'

CENCI
Why — such things are.
No doubt divine revealings may be made.
'T is plain I have been favored from above,
For when I cursed my sons, they died. — Ay — so.
As to the right or wrong, that 's talk. Repentance?
Repentance is an easy moment's work,
And more depends on God than me. Well — well —
I must give up the greater point, which was
To poison and corrupt her soul.

(*A pause,* LUCRETIA *approaches anxiously, and then shrinks back as he speaks*)
One, two;
Ay — Rocco and Cristofano my curse
Strangled; and Giacomo, I think, will find
Life a worse Hell than that beyond the grave;
Beatrice shall, if there be skill in hate,
Die in despair, blaspheming; to Bernardo,
He is so innocent, I will bequeathe
The memory of these deeds, and make his youth

The sepulchre of hope, where evil thoughts
Shall grow like weeds on a neglected tomb.
When all is done, out in the wide Campagna
I will pile up my silver and my gold;
My costly robes, paintings, and tapestries;
My parchments, and all records of my wealth;
And make a bonfire in my joy, and leave
Of my possessions nothing but my name;
Which shall be an inheritance to strip
Its wearer bare as infamy. That done,
My soul, which is a scourge, will I resign
Into the hands of Him who wielded it;
Be it for its own punishment or theirs,
He will not ask it of me till the lash
Be broken in its last and deepest wound;
Until its hate be all inflicted. Yet,
Lest death outspeed my purpose, let me make
Short work and sure.
[*Going.*

LUCRETIA (*stops him*)
Oh, stay! it was a feint;
She had no vision, and she heard no voice.
I said it but to awe thee.

CENCI
That is well.
Vile palterer with the sacred truth of God,
Be thy soul choked with that blaspheming lie!
For Beatrice worse terrors are in store
To bend her to my will.

LUCRETIA
Oh, to what will?
What cruel sufferings more than she has known
Canst thou inflict?

CENCI
Andrea! go, call my daughter
And if she comes not, tell her that I come.

(*To* LUCRETIA)
What sufferings? I will drag her, step by step,
Through infamies unheard of among men;
She shall stand shelterless in the broad noon
Of public scorn, for acts blazoned abroad,
One among which shall be — what? canst thou guess?
She shall become (for what she most abhors
Shall have a fascination to entrap
Her loathing will) to her own conscious self
All she appears to others; and when dead,
As she shall die unshrived and unforgiven,
A rebel to her father and her God,
Her corpse shall be abandoned to the hounds;
Her name shall be the terror of the earth;
Her spirit shall approach the throne of God
Plague-spotted with my curses. I will make
Body and soul a monstrous lump of ruin.

Enter ANDREA

ANDREA
The Lady Beatrice —

CENCI
Speak, pale slave! what
Said she?

ANDREA
My Lord, ‘t was what she looked; she said,
‘Go tell my father that I see the gulf
Of Hell between us two, which he may pass;
I will not.’
[*Exit* ANDREA.

CENCI
Go thou quick, Lucretia,
Tell her to come; yet let her understand
Her coming is consent; and say, moreover,
That if she come not I will curse her.
[*Exit* LUCRETIA.

Ha!
With what but with a father's curse doth God
Panic-strike armèd victory, and make pale
Cities in their prosperity? The world's Father
Must grant a parent's prayer against his child,
Be he who asks even what men call me.
Will not the deaths of her rebellious brothers
Awe her before I speak? for I on them
Did imprecate quick ruin, and it came.

Enter LUCRETIA
Well; what? Speak, wretch!

LUCRETIA
She said, 'I cannot come;
Go tell my father that I see a torrent
Of his own blood raging between us.'

CENCI (*kneeling*)
God,
Hear me! If this most specious mass of flesh,
Which thou hast made my daughter; this my blood,
This particle of my divided being;
Or rather, this my bane and my disease,
Whose sight infects and poisons me; this devil,
Which sprung from me as from a hell, was meant
To aught good use; if her bright loveliness
Was kindled to illumine this dark world;
If, nursed by thy selectest dew of love,
Such virtues blossom in her as should make

The peace of life, I pray thee for my sake,
As thou the common God and Father art
Of her, and me, and all; reverse that doom!
Earth, in the name of God, let her food be
Poison, until she be encrusted round
With leprous stains! Heaven, rain upon her head
The blistering drops of the Maremma's dew
Till she be speckled like a toad; parch up
Those love-enkindled lips, warp those fine limbs
To loathèd lameness! All-beholding sun,
Strike in thine envy those life-darting eyes
With thine own blinding beams!

LUCRETIA
Peace, peace!
For thine own sake unsay those dreadful words.
When high God grants, he punishes such prayers.

CENCI (*leaping up, and throwing his right hand toward Heaven*)
He does his will, I mine! This in addition,
That if she have a child —

LUCRETIA
Horrible thought!

CENCI
That if she ever have a child — and thou,
Quick Nature! I adjure thee by thy God,
That thou be fruitful in her, and increase
And multiply, fulfilling his command,
And my deep imprecation! — may it be
A hideous likeness of herself, that as
From a distorting mirror she may see
Her image mixed with what she most abhors,
Smiling upon her from her nursing breast!
And that the child may from its infancy
Grow, day by day, more wicked and deformed,
Turning her mother's love to misery!

And that both she and it may live until
It shall repay her care and pain with hate,
Or what may else be more unnatural;
So he may hunt her through the clamorous scoffs
Of the loud world to a dishonored grave!
Shall I revoke this curse? Go, bid her come,
Before my words are chronicled in heaven.
[*Exit* LUCRETIA.
I do not feel as if I were a man,
But like a fiend appointed to chastise
The offences of some unremembered world.
My blood is running up and down my veins;
A fearful pleasure makes it prick and tingle;
I feel a giddy sickness of strange awe;
My heart is beating with an expectation
Of horrid joy.

Enter LUCRETIA
What? Speak!

LUCRETIA
She bids thee curse;
And if thy curses, as they cannot do,
Could kill her soul —

CENCI
She would not come. 'T is well,
I can do both; first take what I demand,
And then extort concession. To thy chamber!
Fly ere I spurn thee; and beware this night
That thou cross not my footsteps. It were safer
To come between the tiger and his prey.
[*Exit* LUCRETIA.
It must be late, mine eyes grow weary dim
With unaccustomed heaviness of sleep.
Conscience! O thou most insolent of lies!
They say that sleep, that healing dew of heaven,

Steeps not in balm the foldings of the brain
Which thinks thee an impostor. I will go,
First to belie thee with an hour of rest,
Which will be deep and calm, I feel; and then —
O multitudinous Hell, the fiends will shake
Thine arches with the laughter of their joy!
There shall be lamentation heard in Heaven
As o'er an angel fallen; and upon Earth
All good shall droop and sicken, and ill things
Shall, with a spirit of unnatural life,
Stir and be quickened — even as I am now.
[*Exit.*

SCENE II. — *Before the Castle of Petrella. Enter* BEATRICE *and* LUCRETIA *above on the ramparts.*

BEATRICE
They come not yet.

LUCRETIA
'T is scarce midnight.

BEATRICE
How slow
Behind the course of thought, even sick with speed,
Lags leaden-footed Time!

LUCRETIA
The minutes pass.
If he should wake before the deed is done?

BEATRICE
O mother! he must never wake again.
What thou hast said persuades me that our act
Will but dislodge a spirit of deep hell
Out of a human form.

LUCRETIA
‘T is true he spoke
Of death and judgment with strange confidence
For one so wicked; as a man believing
In God, yet recking not of good or ill.
And yet to die without confession! —

BEATRICE
Oh!
Believe that Heaven is merciful and just,
And will not add our dread necessity
To the amount of his offences.

Enter OLIMPIO *and* MARZIO *below*

LUCRETIA
See,
They come.

BEATRICE
All mortal things must hasten thus
To their dark end. Let us go down.
[*Exeunt* LUCRETIA *and* BEATRICE *from above.*

OLIMPIO
How feel you to this work?

MARZIO
As one who thinks
A thousand crowns excellent market price
For an old murderer’s life. Your cheeks are pale.

OLIMPIO
It is the white reflection of your own,
Which you call pale.

MARZIO
Is that their natural hue?

OLIMPIO
Or ‘t is my hate, and the deferred desire
To wreak it, which extinguishes their blood.

MARZIO
You are inclined then to this business?

OLIMPIO
Ay,
If one should bribe me with a thousand crowns
To kill a serpent which had stung my child,
I could not be more willing.

Enter BEATRICE *and* LUCRETIA *below*
Noble ladies!

BEATRICE
Are ye resolved?

OLIMPIO
Is he asleep?

MARZIO
Is all
Quiet?

LUCRETIA
I mixed an opiate with his drink;
He sleeps so soundly —

BEATRICE
That his death will be
But as a change of sin-chastising dreams,
A dark continuance of the hell within him,
Which God extinguish! But ye are resolved?
Ye know it is a high and holy deed?

OLIMPIO
We are resolved.

MARZIO
As to the how this act
Be warranted, it rests with you.

BEATRICE
Well, follow!

OLIMPIO
Hush! Hark! what noise is that?

MARZIO
Ha! some one comes!

BEATRICE
Ye conscience-stricken cravens, rock to rest
Your baby hearts. It is the iron gate,
Which ye left open, swinging to the wind,
That enters whistling as in scorn. Come, follow!
And be your steps like mine, light, quick and bold.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III. — *An Apartment in the Castle. Enter* BEATRICE *and* LUCRETIA.

LUCRETIA
They are about it now.

BEATRICE
Nay, it is done.

LUCRETIA
I have not heard him groan.

BEATRICE
He will not groan.

LUCRETIA
What sound is that?

BEATRICE
List! ‘t is the tread of feet
About his bed.

LUCRETIA
My God!
If he be now a cold, stiff corpse —

BEATRICE
Oh, fear not
What may be done, but what is left undone;
The act seals all.

Enter OLIMPIO *and* MARZIO
Is it accomplished?

MARZIO
What?

OLIMPIO
Did you not call?

BEATRICE
When?

OLIMPIO
Now.

BEATRICE
I ask if all is over?

OLIMPIO
We dare not kill an old and sleeping man;
His thin gray hair, his stern and reverent brow,
His veinèd hands crossed on his heaving breast,

And the calm innocent sleep in which he lay,
Quelled me. Indeed, indeed, I cannot do it.

MARZIO
But I was bolder; for I chid Olimpio,
And bade him bear his wrongs to his own grave,
And leave me the reward. And now my knife
Touched the loose wrinkled throat, when the old man
Stirred in his sleep, and said, 'God! hear, oh, hear
A father's curse! What, art thou not our father?'
And then he laughed. I knew it was the ghost
Of my dead father speaking through his lips,
And could not kill him.

BEATRICE
Miserable slaves!
Where, if ye dare not kill a sleeping man,
Found ye the boldness to return to me
With such a deed undone? Base palterers!
Cowards and traitors! Why, the very conscience
Which ye would sell for gold and for revenge
Is an equivocation; it sleeps over
A thousand daily acts disgracing men;
And when a deed, where mercy insults heaven —
Why do I talk?
(*Snatching a dagger from one of them, and raising it*)
Hadst thou a tongue to say,
She murdered her own father, I must do it!
But never dream ye shall outlive him long!

OLIMPIO
Stop, for God's sake!

MARZIO
I will go back and kill him.

OLIMPIO
Give me the weapon, we must do thy will.

BEATRICE
Take it! Depart! Return!
[*Exeunt* OLIMPIO *and* MARZIO.
How pale thou art!
We do but that which ‘t were a deadly crime
To leave undone.

LUCRETIA
Would it were done!

BEATRICE
Even whilst
That doubt is passing through your mind, the world
Is conscious of a change. Darkness and hell
Have swallowed up the vapor they sent forth
To blacken the sweet light of life. My breath
Comes, methinks, lighter, and the jellied blood
Runs freely through my veins. Hark!

Enter OLIMPIO *and* MARZIO
He is —

OLIMPIO
Dead!

MARZIO
We strangled him, that there might be no blood;
And then we threw his heavy corpse i’ the garden
Under the balcony; ‘t will seem it fell.

BEATRICE (*giving them a bag of coin*)
Here take this gold and hasten to your homes.
And, Marzio, because thou wast only awed
By that which made me tremble, wear thou this!
(*Clothes him in a rich mantle*)
It was the mantle which my grandfather
Wore in his high prosperity, and men
Envied his state; so may they envy thine.

Thou wert a weapon in the hand of God
To a just use. Live long and thrive! And, mark,
If thou hast crimes, repent; this deed is none.
(*A horn is sounded*)

LUCRETIA
Hark, ‘t is the castle horn: my God! it sounds
Like the last trump.

BEATRICE
Some tedious guest is coming.

LUCRETIA
The drawbridge is let down; there is a tramp
Of horses in the court; fly, hide yourselves!
[*Exeunt* OLIMPIO *and* MARZIO.

BEATRICE
Let us retire to counterfeit deep rest;
I scarcely need to counterfeit it now;
The spirit which doth reign within these limbs
Seems strangely undisturbed. I could even sleep
Fearless and calm; all ill is surely past.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV. — *Another Apartment in the Castle. Enter on one side the Legate* SAVELLA, *introduced by a Servant, and on the other* LUCRETIA *and* BERNARDO.

SAVELLA
Lady, my duty to his Holiness
Be my excuse that thus unseasonably
I break upon your rest. I must speak with
Count Cenci; doth he sleep?

LUCRETIA (*in a hurried and confused manner*)
I think he sleeps;
Yet, wake him not, I pray, spare me awhile.

He is a wicked and a wrathful man;
Should he be roused out of his sleep tonight,
Which is, I know, a hell of angry dreams,
It were not well; indeed it were not well.
Wait till day break.
(*Aside*) Oh, I am deadly sick!

SAVELLA
I grieve thus to distress you, but the Count
Must answer charges of the gravest import,
And suddenly; such my commission is.

LUCRETIA (*with increased agitation*)
I dare not rouse him, I know none who dare;
'T were perilous; you might as safely waken
A serpent, or a corpse in which some fiend
Were laid to sleep.

SAVELLA
Lady, my moments here
Are counted. I must rouse him from his sleep,
Since none else dare.

LUCRETIA (*aside*)
Oh, terror! oh, despair!

(*To* BERNARDO)
Bernardo, conduct you the Lord Legate to
Your father's chamber.
[*Exeunt* SAVELLA *and* BERNARDO.

Enter BEATRICE

BEATRICE
'T is a messenger
Come to arrest the culprit who now stands
Before the throne of unappealable God.

Both Earth and Heaven, consenting arbiters,
Acquit our deed.

LUCRETIA
Oh, agony of fear!
Would that he yet might live! Even now I heard
The Legate's followers whisper as they passed
They had a warrant for his instant death.
All was prepared by unforbidden means,
Which we must pay so dearly, having done.
Even now they search the tower, and find the body;
Now they suspect the truth; now they consult
Before they come to tax us with the fact.
Oh, horrible, 't is all discovered!

BEATRICE
Mother,
What is done wisely is done well. Be bold
As thou art just. 'T is like a truant child,
To fear that others know what thou hast done,
Even from thine own strong consciousness, and thus
Write on unsteady eyes and altered cheeks
All thou wouldst hide. Be faithful to thyself,
And fear no other witness but thy fear.
For if, as cannot be, some circumstance
Should rise in accusation, we can blind
Suspicion with such cheap astonishment,
Or overbear it with such guiltless pride,
As murderers cannot feign. The deed is done,
And what may follow now regards not me.
I am as universal as the light;
Free as the earth-surrounding air; as firm
As the world's centre. Consequence, to me,
Is as the wind which strikes the solid rook,
But shakes it not.
(*A cry within and tumult*)

VOICES
Murder! Murder! Murder!

Enter BERNARDO *and* SAVELLA

SAVELLA (*to his followers*)
Go, search the castle round; sound the alarm;
Look to the gates, that none escape!

BEATRICE
What now?

BERNARDO
I know not what to say — my father ‘s dead.

BEATRICE
How, dead! he only sleeps; you mistake, brother.
His sleep is very calm, very like death;
‘T is wonderful how well a tyrant sleeps.
He is not *dead?*

BERNARDO
Dead; murdered!

LUCRETIA (*with extreme agitation*)
Oh, no, no!
He is not murdered, though he may be dead;
I have alone the keys of those apartments.

SAVELLA
Ha! is it so?

BEATRICE
My Lord, I pray excuse us;
We will retire; my mother is not well;
She seems quite overcome with this strange horror.
[*Exeunt* LUCRETIA *and* BEATRICE.

SAVELLA
Can you suspect who may have murdered him?

BERNARDO
I know not what to think.

SAVELLA
Can you name any
Who had an interest in his death?

BERNARDO
Alas!
I can name none who had not, and those most
Who most lament that such a deed is done;
My mother, and my sister, and myself.

SAVELLA
‘T is strange! There were clear marks of violence.
I found the old man’s body in the moonlight,
Hanging beneath the window of his chamber
Among the branches of a pine; he could not
Have fallen there, for all his limbs lay heaped
And effortless; ‘t is true there was no blood.
Favor me, sir — it much imports your house
That all should be made clear — to tell the ladies
That I request their presence.
[*Exit* BERNARDO.

Enter Guards, bringing in MARZIO

GUARD
We have one.

OFFICER
My Lord, we found this ruffian and another
Lurking among the rocks; there is no doubt
But that they are the murderers of Count Cenci;
Each had a bag of coin; this fellow wore

A gold-inwoven robe, which, shining bright
Under the dark rocks to the glimmering moon,
Betrayed them to our notice; the other fell
Desperately fighting.

SAVELLA
What does he confess?

OFFICER
He keeps firm silence; but these lines found on him
May speak.

SAVELLA
Their language is at least sincere.
(*Reads*)

"TO THE LADY BEATRICE.
That the atonement of what my nature
sickens to conjecture may soon arrive, I
send thee, at thy brother's desire, those
who will speak and do more than I dare
write.
Thy devoted servant,
ORSINO."

Enter LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, *and* BERNARDO
Knowest thou this writing, lady?

BEATRICE
No.

SAVELLA
Nor thou?

LUCRETIA (*her conduct throughout the scene is marked by extreme agitation*)
Where was it found? What is it? It should be
Orsino's hand! It speaks of that strange horror

Which never yet found utterance, but which made
Between that hapless child and her dead father
A gulf of obscure hatred.

SAVELLA
Is it so,
Is it true, Lady, that thy father did
Such outrages as to awaken in thee
Unfilial hate?

BEATRICE
Not hate, ‘t was more than hate;
This is most true, yet wherefore question me?

SAVELLA
There is a deed demanding question done;
Thou hast a secret which will answer not.

BEATRICE
What sayest? My Lord, your words are bold and rash.

SAVELLA
I do arrest all present in the name
Of the Pope’s Holiness. You must to Rome.

LUCRETIA
Oh, not to Rome! indeed we are not guilty.

BEATRICE
Guilty! who dares talk of guilt? My Lord,
I am more innocent of parricide
Than is a child born fatherless. Dear mother,
Your gentleness and patience are no shield
For this keen-judging world, this two-edged lie,
Which seems, but is not. What! will human laws,
Rather will ye who are their ministers,
Bar all access to retribution first,
And then, when Heaven doth interpose to do

What ye neglect, arming familiar things
To the redress of an unwonted crime,
Make ye the victims who demanded it
Culprits? ‘T is ye are culprits! That poor wretch
Who stands so pale, and trembling, and amazed,
If it be true he murdered Cenci, was
A sword in the right hand of justest God.
Wherefore should I have wielded it? unless
The crimes which mortal tongue dare never name
God therefore scruples to avenge.

SAVELLA
You own
That you desired his death?

BEATRICE
It would have been
A crime no less than his, if for one moment
That fierce desire had faded in my heart.
‘T is true I did believe, and hope, and pray,
Ay, I even knew — for God is wise and just —
That some strange sudden death hung over him.
‘T is true that this did happen, and most true
There was no other rest for me on earth,
No other hope in Heaven. Now what of this?

SAVELLA
Strange thoughts beget strange deeds; and here are both;
I judge thee not.

BEATRICE
And yet, if you arrest me,
You are the judge and executioner
Of that which is the life of life; the breath
Of accusation kills an innocent name,
And leaves for lame acquittal the poor life
Which is a mask without it. ‘T is most false
That I am guilty of foul parricide;

Although I must rejoice, for justest cause,
That other hands have sent my father's soul
To ask the mercy he denied to me.
Now leave us free; stain not a noble house
With vague surmises of rejected crime;
Add to our sufferings and your own neglect
No heavier sum; let them have been enough;
Leave us the wreck we have.

SAVELLA
I dare not, Lady.
I pray that you prepare yourselves for Rome.
There the Pope's further pleasure will be known.

LUCRETIA
Oh, not to Rome! Oh, take us not to Rome!

BEATRICE
Why not to Rome, dear mother? There as here
Our innocence is as an armèd heel
To trample accusation. God is there,
As here, and with his shadow ever clothes
The innocent, the injured, and the weak;
And such are we. Cheer up, dear Lady! lean
On me; collect your wandering thoughts. My Lord,
As soon as you have taken some refreshment,
And had all such examinations made
Upon the spot as may be necessary
To the full understanding of this matter,
We shall be ready. Mother, will you come?

LUCRETIA
Ha! they will bind us to the rack, and wrest
Self-accusation from our agony!
Will Giacomo be there? Orsino? Marzio?
All present; all confronted; all demanding
Each from the other's countenance the thing

Which is in every heart! Oh, misery!
(*She faints, and is borne out*)

SAVELLA
She faints; an ill appearance this.

BEATRICE
My Lord,
She knows not yet the uses of the world.
She fears that power is as a beast which grasps
And loosens not; a snake whose look transmutes
All things to guilt which is its nutriment.
She cannot know how well the supine slaves
Of blind authority read the truth of things
When written on a brow of guilelessness;
She sees not yet triumphant Innocence
Stand at the judgment-seat of mortal man,
A judge and an accuser of the wrong
Which drags it there. Prepare yourself, my Lord.
Our suite will join yours in the court below.
[*Exeunt.*

Act V

SCENE I. — *An Apartment in* ORSINO'S *Palace. Enter* ORSINO *and* GIACOMO.

GIACOMO
Do evil deeds thus quickly come to end?
Oh, that the vain remorse which must chastise
Crimes done had but as loud a voice to warn
As its keen sting is mortal to avenge!
Oh, that the hour when present had cast off
The mantle of its mystery, and shown
The ghastly form with which it now returns
When its scared game is roused, cheering the hounds
Of conscience to their prey! Alas, alas!
It was a wicked thought, a piteous deed,
To kill an old and hoary-headed father.

ORSINO
It has turned out unluckily, in truth.

GIACOMO
To violate the sacred doors of sleep;
To cheat kind nature of the placid death
Which she prepares for overwearied age;
To drag from Heaven an unrepentant soul,
Which might have quenched in reconciling prayers
A life of burning crimes —

ORSINO
You cannot say
I urged you to the deed.

GIACOMO
Oh, had I never
Found in thy smooth and ready countenance
The mirror of my darkest thoughts; hadst thou

Never with hints and questions made me look
Upon the monster of my thought, until
It grew familiar to desire —

ORSINO
‘T is thus
Men cast the blame of their unprosperous acts
Upon the abettors of their own resolve;
Or anything but their weak, guilty selves.
And yet, confess the truth, it is the peril
In which you stand that gives you this pale sickness
Of penitence; confess ‘t is fear disguised
From its own shame that takes the mantle now
Of thin remorse. What if we yet were safe?

GIACOMO
How can that be? Already Beatrice,
Lucretia and the murderer are in prison.
I doubt not officers are, whilst we speak,
Sent to arrest us.

ORSINO
I have all prepared
For instant flight. We can escape even now,
So we take fleet occasion by the hair.

GIACOMO
Rather expire in tortures, as I may.
What! will you cast by self-accusing flight
Assured conviction upon Beatrice?
She who alone, in this unnatural work
Stands like God’s angel ministered upon
By fiends; avenging such a nameless wrong
As turns black parricide to piety;
Whilst we for basest ends — I fear, Orsino,
While I consider all your words and looks,
Comparing them with your proposal now,
That you must be a villain. For what end

Could you engage in such a perilous crime,
Training me on with hints, and signs, and smiles,
Even to this gulf? Thou art no liar? No,
Thou art a lie! Traitor and murderer!
Coward and slave! But no — defend thyself;
(*Drawing*)
Let the sword speak what the indignant tongue
Disdains to brand thee with.

ORSINO
Put up your weapon.
Is it the desperation of your fear
Makes you thus rash and sudden with a friend,
Now ruined for your sake? If honest anger
Have moved you, know, that what I just proposed
Was but to try you. As for me, I think
Thankless affection led me to this point,
From which, if my firm temper could repent,
I cannot now recede. Even whilst we speak,
The ministers of justice wait below;
They grant me these brief moments. Now, if you
Have any word of melancholy comfort
To speak to your pale wife, ‘t were best to pass
Out at the postern, and avoid them so.

GIACOMO
O generous friend! how canst thou pardon me?
Would that my life could purchase thine!

ORSINO
That wish
Now comes a day too late. Haste; fare thee well!
Hear’st thou not steps along the corridor?
[*Exit* GIACOMO.
I ‘m sorry for it; but the guards are waiting
At his own gate, and such was my contrivance
That I might rid me both of him and them.

I thought to act a solemn comedy
Upon the painted scene of this new world,
And to attain my own peculiar ends
By some such plot of mingled good and ill
As others weave; but there arose a Power
Which grasped and snapped the threads of my device,
And turned it to a net of ruin — Ha!
(*A shout is heard*)
Is that my name I hear proclaimed abroad?
But I will pass, wrapped in a vile disguise,
Rags on my back and a false innocence
Upon my face, through the misdeeming crowd,
Which judges by what seems. 'T is easy then,
For a new name and for a country new,
And a new life fashioned on old desires,
To change the honors of abandoned Rome.
And these must be the masks of that within,
Which must remain unaltered. — Oh, I fear
That what is past will never let me rest!
Why, when none else is conscious, but myself,
Of my misdeeds, should my own heart's contempt
Trouble me? Have I not the power to fly
My own reproaches? Shall I be the slave
Of — what? A word? which those of this false world
Employ against each other, not themselves,
As men wear daggers not for self-offence.
But if I am mistaken, where shall I
Find the disguise to hide me from myself,
As now I skulk from every other eye?
[*Exit.*

SCENE II. — *A Hall of Justice.* CAMILLO, JUDGES, *etc., are discovered seated;* MARZIO *is led in.*

FIRST JUDGE
Accused, do you persist in your denial?
I ask you, are you innocent, or guilty?

I demand who were the participators
In your offence. Speak truth, and the whole truth.

MARZIO
My God! I did not kill him; I know nothing;
Olimpio sold the robe to me from which
You would infer my guilt.

SECOND JUDGE
Away with him!

FIRST JUDGE
Dare you, with lips yet white from the rack's kiss,
Speak false? Is it so soft a questioner
That you would bandy lover's talk with it,
Till it wind out your life and soul? Away!

MARZIO
Spare me! Oh, spare! I will confess.

FIRST JUDGE
Then speak.

MARZIO
I strangled him in his sleep.

FIRST JUDGE
Who urged you to it?

MARZIO
His own son Giacomo and the young prelate
Orsino sent me to Petrella; there
The ladies Beatrice and Lucretia
Tempted me with a thousand crowns, and I
And my companion forthwith murdered him.
Now let me die.

FIRST JUDGE
This sounds as bad as truth.
Guards, there, lead forth the prisoners.

Enter LUCRETIA, BEATRICE *and* GIACOMO, *guarded*
Look upon this man;
When did you see him last?

BEATRICE
We never saw him.

MARZIO
You know me too well, Lady Beatrice.

BEATRICE
I know thee! how? where? when?

MARZIO
You know ‘t was I
Whom you did urge with menaces and bribes
To kill your father. When the thing was done,
You clothed me in a robe of woven gold,
And bade me thrive; how I have thriven, you see.
You, my Lord Giacomo, Lady Lucretia,
You know that what I speak is true.
[BEATRICE *advances towards him; he covers his face, and shrinks back.*
Oh, dart
The terrible resentment of those eyes
On the dead earth! Turn them away from me!
They wound; ‘t was torture forced the truth. My Lords,
Having said this, let me be led to death.

BEATRICE
Poor wretch, I pity thee; yet stay awhile.

CAMILLO
Guards, lead him not away.

BEATRICE
Cardinal Camillo,
You have a good repute for gentleness
And wisdom; can it be that you sit here
To countenance a wicked farce like this?
When some obscure and trembling slave is dragged
From sufferings which might shake the sternest heart
And bade to answer, not as he believes,
But as those may suspect or do desire
Whose questions thence suggest their own reply;
And that in peril of such hideous torments
As merciful God spares even the damned. Speak now
The thing you surely know, which is, that you,
If your fine frame were stretched upon that wheel,
And you were told, 'Confess that you did poison
Your little nephew; that fair blue-eyed child
Who was the lodestar of your life;' and though
All see, since his most swift and piteous death,
That day and night, and heaven and earth, and time,
And all the things hoped for or done therein,
Are changed to you, through your exceeding grief,
Yet you would say, 'I confess anything,'
And beg from your tormentors, like that slave,
The refuge of dishonorable death.
I pray thee, Cardinal, that thou assert
My innocence.

CAMILLO (*much moved*)
What shall we think, my Lords?
Shame on these tears! I thought the heart was frozen
Which is their fountain. I would pledge my soul
That she is guiltless.

JUDGE
Yet she must be tortured.

CAMILLO
I would as soon have tortured mine own nephew
(If he now lived, he would be just her age;
His hair, too, was her color, and his eyes
Like hers in shape, but blue and not so deep)
As that most perfect image of God's love
That ever came sorrowing upon the earth.
She is as pure as speechless infancy!

JUDGE
Well, be her purity on your head, my Lord,
If you forbid the rack. His Holiness
Enjoined us to pursue this monstrous crime
By the severest forms of law; nay, even
To stretch a point against the criminals.
The prisoners stand accused of parricide
Upon such evidence as justifies
Torture.

BEATRICE
What evidence? This man's?

JUDGE
Even so.

BEATRICE (*to* MARZIO)
Come near. And who art thou, thus chosen forth
Out of the multitude of living men,
To kill the innocent?

MARZIO
I am Marzio,
Thy father's vassal.

BEATRICE
Fix thine eyes on mine;
Answer to what I ask.
(*Turning to the Judges*)

I prithee mark
His countenance; unlike bold calumny,
Which sometimes dares not speak the thing it looks,
He dares not look the thing he speaks, but bends
His gaze on the blind earth.

(*To* MARZIO)
What! wilt thou say
That I did murder my own father?

MARZIO
Oh!
Spare me! My brain swims round — I cannot speak —
It was that horrid torture forced the truth.
Take me away! Let her not look on me!
I am a guilty miserable wretch!
I have said all I know; now, let me die!

BEATRICE
My Lords, if by my nature I had been
So stern as to have planned the crime alleged,
Which your suspicions dictate to this slave
And the rack makes him utter, do you think
I should have left this two-edged instrument
Of my misdeed; this man, this bloody knife,
With my own name engraven on the heft,
Lying unsheathed amid a world of foes,
For my own death? that with such horrible need
For deepest silence I should have neglected
So trivial a precaution as the making
His tomb the keeper of a secret written
On a thief's memory? What is his poor life?
What are a thousand lives? A parricide
Had trampled them like dust; and see, he lives!
(*Turning to* MARZIO)
And thou —

MARZIO
Oh, spare me! Speak to me no more!
That stern yet piteous look, those solemn tones,
Wound worse than torture.
(*To the Judges*)
I have told it all;
For pity's sake lead me away to death.

CAMILLO
Guards, lead him nearer the Lady Beatrice;
He shrinks from her regard like autumn's leaf
From the keen breath of the serenest north.

BEATRICE
O thou who tremblest on the giddy verge
Of life and death, pause ere thou answerest me;
So mayst thou answer God with less dismay.
What evil have we done thee? I, alas!
Have lived but on this earth a few sad years,
And so my lot was ordered that a father
First turned the moments of awakening life
To drops, each poisoning youth's sweet hope; and then
Stabbed with one blow my everlasting soul,
And my untainted fame; and even that peace
Which sleeps within the core of the heart's heart.
But the wound was not mortal; so my hate
Became the only worship I could lift
To our great Father, who in pity and love
Armed thee, as thou dost say, to cut him off;
And thus his wrong becomes my accusation.
And art thou the accuser? If thou hopest
Mercy in heaven, show justice upon earth;
Worse than a bloody hand is a hard heart.
If thou hast done murders, made thy life's path
Over the trampled laws of God and man,
Rush not before thy Judge, and say: 'My Maker,
I have done this and more; for there was one

Who was most pure and innocent on earth;
And because she endured what never any,
Guilty or innocent, endured before,
Because her wrongs could not be told, nor thought,
Because thy hand at length did rescue her,
I with my words killed her and all her kin.'
Think, I adjure you, what it is to slay
The reverence living in the minds of men
Towards our ancient house and stainless fame!
Think what it is to strangle infant pity,
Cradled in the belief of guileless looks,
Till it become a crime to suffer. Think
What 't is to blot with infamy and blood
All that which shows like innocence, and is —
Hear me, great God! — I swear, most innocent;
So that the world lose all discrimination
Between the sly, fierce, wild regard of guilt,
And that which now compels thee to reply
To what I ask: Am I, or am I not
A parricide?

MARZIO
Thou art not!

JUDGE
What is this?

MARZIO
I here declare those whom I did accuse
Are innocent. 'T is I alone am guilty.

JUDGE
Drag him away to torments; let them be
Subtle and long drawn out, to tear the folds
Of the heart's inmost cell. Unbind him not
Till he confess.

MARZIO
Torture me as ye will;
A keener pang has wrung a higher truth
From my last breath. She is most innocent!
Bloodhounds, not men, glut yourselves well with me!
I will not give you that fine piece of nature
To rend and ruin.
[*Exit* MARZIO, *guarded.*

CAMILLO
What say ye now, my Lords?

JUDGE
Let tortures strain the truth till it be white
As snow thrice-sifted by the frozen wind.

CAMILLO
Yet stained with blood.

JUDGE (*to* BEATRICE)
Know you this paper, Lady?

BEATRICE
Entrap me not with questions. Who stands here
As my accuser? Ha! wilt thou be he,
Who art my judge? Accuser, witness, judge,
What, all in one? Here is Orsino's name;
Where is Orsino? Let his eye meet mine.
What means this scrawl? Alas! ye know not what.
And therefore on the chance that it may be
Some evil, will ye kill us?

Enter an Officer

OFFICER
Marzio 's dead.

JUDGE
What did he say?

OFFICER
Nothing. As soon as we
Had bound him on the wheel, he smiled on us,
As one who baffles a deep adversary;
And holding his breath died.

JUDGE
There remains nothing
But to apply the question to those prisoners
Who yet remain stubborn.

CAMILLO
I overrule
Further proceedings, and in the behalf
Of these most innocent and noble persons
Will use my interest with the Holy Father.

JUDGE
Let the Pope's pleasure then be done. Meanwhile
Conduct these culprits each to separate cells;
And be the engines ready; for this night,
If the Pope's resolution be as grave,
Pious, and just as once, I 'll wring the truth
Out of those nerves and sinews, groan by groan.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III. — *The Cell of a Prison.* BEATRICE *is discovered asleep on a couch.*

Enter BERNARDO

BERNARDO
How gently slumber rests upon her face,
Like the last thoughts of some day sweetly spent,
Closing in night and dreams, and so prolonged.

After such torments as she bore last night,
How light and soft her breathing comes. Ay me!
Methinks that I shall never sleep again.
But I must shake the heavenly dew of rest
From this sweet folded flower, thus — wake, awake!
What, sister, canst thou sleep?

BEATRICE (*awaking*)
I was just dreaming
That we were all in Paradise. Thou knowest
This cell seems like a kind of Paradise
After our father's presence.

BERNARDO
Dear, dear sister,
Would that thy dream were not a dream! Oh, God,
How shall I tell?

BEATRICE
What wouldst thou tell, sweet brother?

BERNARDO
Look not so calm and happy, or even whilst
I stand considering what I have to say,
My heart will break.

BEATRICE
See now, thou mak'st me weep;
How very friendless thou wouldst be, dear child,
If I were dead. Say what thou hast to say.

BERNARDO
They have confessed; they could endure no more
The tortures —

BEATRICE
Ha! what was there to confess?
They must have told some weak and wicked lie

To flatter their tormentors. Have they said
That they were guilty? O white innocence,
That thou shouldst wear the mask of guilt to hide
Thine awful and serenest countenance
From those who know thee not!

Enter JUDGE, *with* LUCRETIA *and* GIACOMO, *guarded*
Ignoble hearts!
For some brief spasms of pain, which are at least
As mortal as the limbs through which they pass,
Are centuries of high splendor laid in dust?
And that eternal honor, which should live
Sunlike, above the reek of mortal fame,
Changed to a mockery and a byword? What!
Will you give up these bodies to be dragged
At horses' heels, so that our hair should sweep
The footsteps of the vain and senseless crowd,
Who, that they may make our calamity
Their worship and their spectacle, will leave
The churches and the theatres as void
As their own hearts? Shall the light multitude
Fling, at their choice, curses or faded pity,
Sad funeral flowers to deck a living corpse,
Upon us as we pass to pass away,
And leave — what memory of our having been?
Infamy, blood, terror, despair? O thou
Who wert a mother to the parentless,
Kill not thy child! let not her wrongs kill thee!
Brother, lie down with me upon the rack,
And let us each be silent as a corpse;
It soon will be as soft as any grave.
'T is but the falsehood it can wring from fear
Makes the rack cruel.

GIACOMO
They will tear the truth

Even from thee at last, those cruel pains;
For pity's sake say thou art guilty now.

LUCRETIA
Oh, speak the truth! Let us all quickly die;
And after death, God is our judge, not they;
He will have mercy on us.

BERNARDO
If indeed
It can be true, say so, dear sister mine;
And then the Pope will surely pardon you,
And all be well.

JUDGE
Confess, or I will warp
Your limbs with such keen tortures —

BEATRICE
Tortures! Turn
The rack henceforth into a spinning-wheel!
Torture your dog, that he may tell when last
He lapped the blood his master shed — not me!
My pangs are of the mind, and of the heart,
And of the soul; ay, of the inmost soul,
Which weeps within tears as of burning gall
To see, in this ill world where none are true,
My kindred false to their deserted selves;
And with considering all the wretched life
Which I have lived, and its now wretched end;
And the small justice shown by Heaven and Earth
To me or mine; and what a tyrant thou art,
And what slaves these; and what a world we make,
The oppressor and the oppressed — such pangs compel
My answer. What is it thou wouldst with me?

JUDGE
Art thou not guilty of thy father's death?

BEATRICE
Or wilt thou rather tax high-judging God
That he permitted such an act as that
Which I have suffered, and which he beheld;
Made it unutterable, and took from it
All refuge, all revenge, all consequence,
But that which thou hast called my father's death?
Which is or is not what men call a crime,
Which either I have done, or have not done;
Say what ye will. I shall deny no more.
If ye desire it thus, thus let it be,
And so an end of all. Now do your will;
No other pains shall force another word.

JUDGE
She is convicted, but has not confessed.
Be it enough. Until their final sentence
Let none have converse with them. You, young Lord,
Linger not here!

BEATRICE
Oh, tear him not away!

JUDGE
Guards! do your duty.

BERNARDO (*embracing* BEATRICE)
Oh! would ye divide
Body from soul?

OFFICER
That is the headsman's business.
[*Exeunt all but* LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, *and* GIACOMO.

GIACOMO
Have I confessed? Is it all over now?
No hope! no refuge! O weak, wicked tongue,
Which hast destroyed me, would that thou hadst been

Cut out and thrown to dogs first! To have killed
My father first, and then betrayed my sister —
Ay thee! the one thing innocent and pure
In this black, guilty world — to that which I
So well deserve! My wife! my little ones!
Destitute, helpless; and I — Father! God!
Canst thou forgive even the unforgiving,
When their full hearts break thus, thus?
(*Covers his face and weeps*)

LUCRETIA
O my child!
To what a dreadful end are we all come!
Why did I yield? Why did I not sustain
Those torments? Oh, that I were all dissolved
Into these fast and unavailing tears,
Which flow and feel not!

BEATRICE
What ‘t was weak to do,
‘T is weaker to lament, once being done;
Take cheer! The God who knew my wrong, and made
Our speedy act the angel of his wrath,
Seems, and but seems, to have abandoned us.
Let us not think that we shall die for this.
Brother, sit near me; give me your firm hand,
You had a manly heart. Bear up! bear up!
O dearest Lady, put your gentle head
Upon my lap, and try to sleep awhile;
Your eyes look pale, hollow, and overworn,
With heaviness of watching and slow grief.
Come, I will sing you some low, sleepy tune,
Not cheerful, nor yet sad; some dull old thing,
Some outworn and unused monotony,
Such as our country gossips sing and spin,
Till they almost forget they live. Lie down —

So, that will do. Have I forgot the words?
Faith! they are sadder than I thought they were.

SONG
False friend, wilt thou smile or weep
When my life is laid asleep?
Little cares for a smile or a tear,
The clay-cold corpse upon the bier!
Farewell! Heigh-ho!
What is this whispers low?
There is a snake in thy smile, my dear;
And bitter poison within thy tear.

Sweet sleep! were death like to thee,
Or if thou couldst mortal be,
I would close these eyes of pain;
When to wake? Never again.
O World! farewell!
Listen to the passing bell!
It say, thou and I must part,
With a light and a heavy heart.
(*The scene closes*)

SCENE IV. — *A Hall of the Prison. Enter* CAMILLO *and* BERNARDO.

CAMILLO
The Pope is stern; not to be moved or bent.
He looked as calm and keen as is the engine
Which tortures and which kills, exempt itself
From aught that it inflicts; a marble form,
A rite, a law, a custom, not a man.
He frowned, as if to frown had been the trick
Of his machinery, on the advocates
Presenting the defences, which he tore
And threw behind, muttering with hoarse, harsh voice —
'Which among ye defended their old father
Killed in his sleep?' then to another—'Thou
Dost this in virtue of thy place; 't is well.'

He turned to me then, looking deprecation,
And said these three words, coldly—'They must die.'

BERNARDO
And yet you left him not?

CAMILLO
I urged him still;
Pleading, as I could guess, the devilish wrong
Which prompted your unnatural parent's death.
And he replied—'Paolo Santa Croce
Murdered his mother yester evening,
And he is fled. Parricide grows so rife,
That soon, for some just cause no doubt, the young
Will strangle us all, dozing in our chairs.
Authority, and power, and hoary hair
Are grown crimes capital. You are my nephew,
You come to ask their pardon; stay a moment;
Here is their sentence; never see me more
Till, to the letter, it be all fulfilled.'

BERNARDO
Oh, God, not so! I did believe indeed
That all you said was but sad preparation
For happy news. Oh, there are words and looks
To bend the sternest purpose! Once I knew them,
Now I forget them at my dearest need.
What think you if I seek him out, and bathe
His feet and robe with hot and bitter tears?
Importune him with prayers, vexing his brain
With my perpetual cries, until in rage
He strike me with his pastoral cross, and trample
Upon my prostrate head, so that my blood
May stain the senseless dust on which he treads,
And remorse waken mercy? I will do it!
Oh, wait till I return!
[*Rushes out.*

CAMILLO
Alas, poor boy!
A wreck-devoted seaman thus might pray
To the deaf sea.

Enter LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, *and* GIACOMO, *guarded*

BEATRICE
I hardly dare to fear
That thou bring'st other news than a just pardon.

CAMILLO
May God in heaven be less inexorable
To the Pope's prayers than he has been to mine.
Here is the sentence and the warrant.

BEATRICE (*wildly*)
Oh,
My God! Can it be possible I have
To die so suddenly? so young to go
Under the obscure, cold, rotting, wormy ground!
To be nailed down into a narrow place;
To see no more sweet sunshine; hear no more
Blithe voice of living thing; muse not again
Upon familiar thoughts, sad, yet thus lost!
How fearful! to be nothing! Or to be —
What? Oh, where am I? Let me not go mad!
Sweet Heaven, forgive weak thoughts! If there should be
No God, no Heaven, no Earth in the void world —
The wide, gray, lampless, deep, unpeopled world!
If all things then should be — my father's spirit,
His eye, his voice, his touch surrounding me;
The atmosphere and breath of my dead life!
If sometimes, as a shape more like himself,
Even the form which tortured me on earth,
Masked in gray hairs and wrinkles, he should come,
And wind me in his hellish arms, and fix
His eyes on mine, and drag me down, down, down!

For was he not alone omnipotent
On Earth, and ever present? even though dead,
Does not his spirit live in all that breathe,
And work for me and mine still the same ruin,
Scorn, pain, despair? Who ever yet returned
To teach the laws of death's untrodden realm?
Unjust perhaps as those which drive us now,
Oh, whither, whither?

LUCRETIA
Trust in God's sweet love,
The tender promises of Christ; ere night,
Think we shall be in Paradise.

BEATRICE
'T is past!
Whatever comes, my heart shall sink no more.
And yet, I know not why, your words strike chill;
How tedious, false, and cold seem all things! I
Have met with much injustice in this world;
No difference has been made by God or man,
Or any power moulding my wretched lot,
'Twixt good or evil, as regarded me.
I am cut off from the only world I know,
From light, and life, and love, in youth's sweet prime.
You do well telling me to trust in God;
I hope I do trust in him. In whom else
Can any trust? And yet my heart is cold.

(*During the latter speeches* GIACOMO *has retired conversing with* CAMILLO, *who now goes out;* GIACOMO *advances*)

GIACOMO
Know you not, mother — sister, know you not?
Bernardo even now is gone to implore
The Pope to grant our pardon.

LUCRETIA
Child, perhaps
It will be granted. We may all then live
To make these woes a tale for distant years.
Oh, what a thought! It gushes to my heart
Like the warm blood.

BEATRICE
Yet both will soon be cold.
Oh, trample out that thought! Worse than despair,
Worse than the bitterness of death, is hope;
It is the only ill which can find place
Upon the giddy, sharp, and narrow hour
Tottering beneath us. Plead with the swift frost
That it should spare the eldest flower of spring;
Plead with awakening earthquake, o'er whose couch
Even now a city stands, strong, fair, and free;
Now stench and blackness yawn, like death. Oh, plead
With famine, or wind-walking pestilence,
Blind lightning, or the deaf sea, not with man —
Cruel, cold, formal man; righteous in words,
In deeds a Cain. No, mother, we must die;
Since such is the reward of innocent lives,
Such the alleviation of worst wrongs.
And whilst our murderers live, and hard, cold men,
Smiling and slow, walk through a world of tears
To death as to life's sleep; 't were just the grave
Were some strange joy for us. Come, obscure Death,
And wind me in thine all-embracing arms!
Like a fond mother hide me in thy bosom,
And rock me to the sleep from which none wake.
Live ye, who live, subject to one another
As we were once, who now —

BERNARDO *rushes in*

BERNARDO
Oh, horrible!
That tears, that looks, that hope poured forth in prayer,
Even till the heart is vacant and despairs,
Should all be vain! The ministers of death
Are waiting round the doors. I thought I saw
Blood on the face of one — what if ‘t were fancy?
Soon the heart’s blood of all I love on earth
Will sprinkle him, and he will wipe it off
As if ‘t were only rain. O life! O world!
Cover me! let me be no more! To see
That perfect mirror of pure innocence
Wherein I gazed, and grew happy and good,
Shivered to dust! To see thee, Beatrice,
Who made all lovely thou didst look upon —
Thee, light of life — dead, dark! while I say, sister,
To hear I have no sister; and thou, mother,
Whose love was as a bond to all our loves —
Dead! the sweet bond broken!

Enter CAMILLO *and Guards*

They come! Let me
Kiss those warm lips before their crimson leaves
Are blighted — white — cold. Say farewell, before
Death chokes that gentle voice! Oh, let me hear
You speak!

BEATRICE
Farewell, my tender brother. Think
Of our sad fate with gentleness, as now;
And let mild, pitying thoughts lighten for thee
Thy sorrow’s load. Err not in harsh despair,
But tears and patience. One thing more, my child;
For thine own sake be constant to the love
Thou bearest us; and to the faith that I,
Though wrapped in a strange cloud of crime and shame,

Lived ever holy and unstained. And though
Ill tongues shall wound me, and our common name
Be as a mark stamped on thine innocent brow
For men to point at as they pass, do thou
Forbear, and never think a thought unkind
Of those who perhaps love thee in their graves.
So mayest thou die as I do; fear and pain
Being subdued. Farewell! Farewell! Farewell!

BERNARDO
I cannot say farewell!

CAMILLO
O Lady Beatrice!

BEATRICE
Give yourself no unnecessary pain,
My dear Lord Cardinal. Here, mother, tie
My girdle for me, and bind up this hair
In any simple knot; ay, that does well.
And yours I see is coming down. How often
Have we done this for one another; now
We shall not do it any more. My Lord,
We are quite ready. Well—'t is very well.

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

This four-act lyrical drama was first published in 1820 and concerns the Greek mythological figure Prometheus and his suffering at the hands of Zeus. The play is inspired by the classical *Prometheia*, a trilogy of plays attributed to the Athenian playwright Aeschylus. Shelley's play narrates Prometheus' release from captivity, but unlike Aeschylus' play, there is no reconciliation between Prometheus and Jupiter at the end of the work. Instead, Jupiter is overthrown, allowing Prometheus to be released. *Prometheus Unbound* is considered to be a closet drama, never intended to be performed on the stage. Nevertheless, the drama offers much suspense, engaging dialogue and other dramatic aspects that would make a theatrical performance entertaining.

Posthumous Portrait of Shelley Writing Prometheus Unbound by Joseph Severn, 1845

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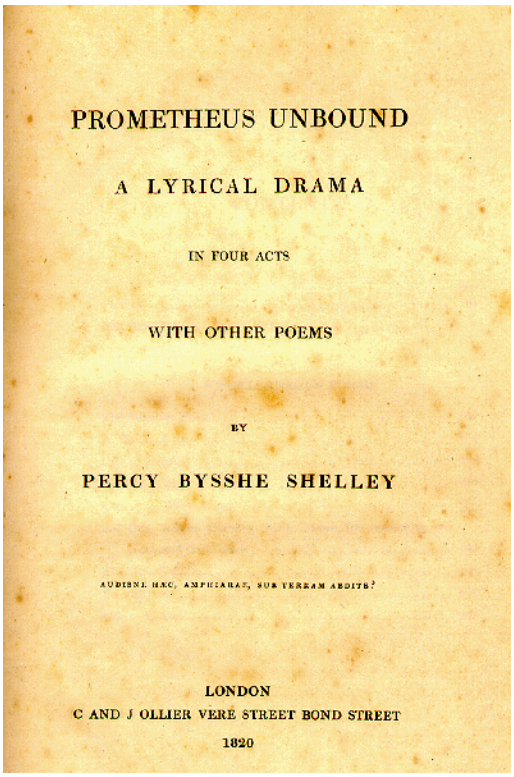

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

A LYRICAL DRAMA

IN FOUR ACTS

WITH OTHER POEMS

BY

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

AUDISNE HAEC, AMPHIARAE, SUB TERRAM ABDITE?

LONDON
C AND J OLLIER VERE STREET BOND STREET
1820

The 1820 title page

Introductory Note

AUDISNE HÆC, AMPHIARÆ, SUB TERRAM ABDITE?

Prometheus Unbound best combines the various elements of Shelley's genius in their most complete expression, and unites harmoniously his lyrically creative power of imagination and his 'passion for reforming the world.' It is the fruit of an outburst of poetic energy under the double stimulus of his enthusiastic Greek studies, begun under Peacock's influence, and of his delight in the beauty of Italy, whither he had removed for health and rest. It marks his full mastery of his powers. It is, not less than *Queen Mab* and *The Revolt of Islam,* a poem of the moral perfection of man; and, not less than *Alastor* and *Epipsychidion,* a poem of spiritual ideality. He was himself in love with it: 'a poem of a higher character than anything I have yet attempted and perhaps less an imitation of anything that has gone before it,' he writes to Ollier; and again, 'a poem in my best style, whatever that may amount to,... the most perfect of my productions,' and 'the best thing I ever wrote;' and finally he says, '*Prometheus Unbound,* I must tell you, is my favorite poem; I charge you, therefore, especially to pet him and feed him with fine ink and good paper.... I think, if I can judge by its merits, the *Prometheus* cannot sell beyond twenty copies.' Nor did he lose his affection for it. Trelawny records him as saying, 'If that is not durable poetry, tried by the severest test, I do not know what is. It is a lofty subject, not inadequately treated, and should not perish with me.'... 'My friends say my *Prometheus* is too wild, ideal, and perplexed with imagery. It may be so. It has no resemblance to the Greek drama. It is original; and cost me severe mental labor. Authors, like mothers, prefer the children who have given them most trouble.'

The drama was begun in the summer-house of his garden at Este about September, 1818, and the first Act had been finished as early as October 8; it was apparently laid aside, and again taken up at Rome in the spring of 1819, where, under the circumstances described in the preface, the second and third Acts were added, and the work, in its first form, was thus completed by April 6. The fourth Act was an afterthought, and was composed at Florence toward the end of the year. The whole was published, with other poems, in the summer of 1820.

The following extracts from Mrs. Shelley's long and admirable note show the progress of the poem during its composition, the atmosphere of its creation, and its general scheme:

'The first aspect of Italy enchanted Shelley; it seemed a garden of delight placed beneath a clearer and brighter heaven than any he had lived under before. He wrote long descriptive letters during the first year of his residence in Italy, which, as compositions, are the most beautiful in the world, and show how truly he appreciated and studied the wonders of nature and art in that divine land.

'The poetical spirit within him speedily revived with all the power and with more than all the beauty of his first attempts. He meditated three subjects as the groundwork for lyrical Dramas. One was the story of Tasso: of this a slight fragment of a song of Tasso remains. The other was one founded on the book of Job, which he never abandoned in idea, but of which no trace remains among his papers. The third was the *Prometheus Unbound.* The Greek tragedians were now his most familiar companions in his wanderings, and the sublime majesty of Æschylus filled him with wonder and delight. The father of Greek tragedy does not possess the pathos of Sophocles, nor the variety and tenderness of Euripides; the interest on which he founds his dramas is often elevated above human vicissitudes into the mighty passions and throes of gods and demigods — such fascinated the abstract imagination of Shelley.

'We spent a month at Milan, visiting the Lake of Como during that interval. Thence we passed in succession to Pisa, Leghorn, the Baths of Lucca, Venice, Este, Rome, Naples, and back again to Rome, whither we returned early in March, 1819. During all this time Shelley meditated the subject of his drama, and wrote portions of it. Other poems were composed during this interval, and while at the Bogni di Lucca he translated Plato's *Symposium.* But though he diversified his studies, his thoughts centred in the *Prometheus.* At last, when at Rome, during a bright and beautiful spring, he gave up his whole time to the composition. The spot selected for his study was, as he mentions in his preface, the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla. These are little known to the ordinary visitor at Rome. He describes them in a letter, with that poetry, and delicacy, and truth of description, which rendered his narrated impressions of scenery of unequalled beauty and interest.

‘At first he completed the drama in three acts. It was not till several months after, when at Florence, that he conceived that a fourth act, a sort of hymn of rejoicing in the fulfilment of the prophecies with regard to Prometheus, ought to be added to complete the composition.

‘The prominent feature of Shelley’s theory of the destiny of the human species was, that evil is not inherent in the system of the creation, but an accident that might be expelled. This also forms a portion of Christianity; God made earth and man perfect, till he, by his fall,

‘“Brought death into the world and all our woe.”

Shelley believed that mankind had only to will that there should be no evil, and there would be none. It is not my part in these notes to notice the arguments that have been urged against this opinion, but to mention the fact that he entertained it, and was indeed attached to it with fervent enthusiasm. That man could be so perfectionized as to be able to expel evil from his own nature, and from the greater part of the creation, was the cardinal point of his system. And the subject he loved best to dwell on, was the image of One warring with the Evil Principle, oppressed not only by it, but by all, even the good, who were deluded into considering evil a necessary portion of humanity; a victim full of fortitude and hope, and the spirit of triumph emanating from a reliance in the ultimate omnipotence of good. Such he had depicted in his last poem, when he made Laon the enemy and the victim of tyrants. He now took a more idealized image of the same subject. He followed certain classical authorities in figuring Saturn as the good principle, Jupiter the usurping evil one, and Prometheus as the regenerator, who, unable to bring mankind back to primitive innocence, used knowledge as a weapon to defeat evil, by leading mankind beyond the state wherein they are sinless through ignorance, to that in which they are virtuous through wisdom. Jupiter punished the temerity of the Titan by chaining him to a rock of Caucasus, and causing a vulture to devour his still-renewed heart. There was a prophecy afloat in heaven portending the fall of Jove, the secret of averting which was known only to Prometheus; and the god offered freedom from torture on condition of its being communicated to him. According to the mythological story, this referred to the offspring of Thetis, who was destined to be greater than his father. Prometheus at last bought pardon for his crime of enriching mankind with his gifts, by revealing the prophecy. Hercules killed the vulture and set him free, and Thetis was married to Peleus the father of Achilles.

‘Shelley adapted the catastrophe of this story to his peculiar views. The son, greater than his father, born of the nuptials of Jupiter and Thetis, was to dethrone Evil and bring back a happier reign than that of Saturn. Prometheus defies the power of his enemy, and endures centuries of torture, till the hour arrives when Jove, blind to the real event, but darkly guessing that some great good to himself will flow, espouses Thetis. At the moment, the Primal Power of the world drives him from his usurped throne, and Strength, in the person of Hercules, liberates Humanity, typified in Prometheus, from the tortures generated by evil done or suffered. Asia, one of the Oceanides, is the wife of Prometheus — she was, according to other mythological interpretations, the same as Venus and Nature. When the Benefactor of Mankind is liberated, Nature resumes the beauty of her prime, and is united to her husband, the emblem of the human race, in perfect and happy union. In the fourth Act, the poet gives further scope to his imagination, and idealizes the forms of creation, such as we know them, instead of such as they appeared to the Greeks. Maternal Earth, the mighty Parent, is superseded by the Spirit of the Earth — the guide of our planet through the realms of sky — while his fair and weaker companion and attendant, the Spirit of the Moon, receives bliss from the annihilation of Evil in the superior sphere.

‘Shelley develops, more particularly in the lyrics of this drama, his abstruse and imaginative theories with regard to the Creation. It requires a mind as subtle and penetrating as his own to understand the mystic meanings scattered throughout the poem. They elude the ordinary reader by their abstraction and delicacy of distinction, but they are far from vague. It was his design to write prose metaphysical essays on the nature of Man, which would have served to explain much of what is obscure in his poetry; a few scattered fragments of observations and remarks alone remain. He considered these philosophical views of mind and nature to be instinct with the intensest spirit of poetry.

‘More popular poets clothe the ideal with familiar and sensible imagery. Shelley loved to idealize the real — to gift the mechanism of the material universe with a soul and a voice, and to bestow such also on the most delicate and abstract emotions and thoughts of the mind....

‘Through the whole Poem there reigns a sort of calm and holy spirit of love; it soothes the tortured, and is hope to the expectant, till the prophecy is fulfilled, and Love, untainted by any evil, becomes the law of the world....

‘The charm of the Roman climate helped to clothe his thoughts in greater beauty than they had ever worn before; and as he wandered among the ruins, made one with nature in their decay, or gazed on the Praxitelean shapes that throng the Vatican, the Capitol, and the palaces of Rome, his soul imbibed forms of loveliness which became a portion of itself. There are many passages in the *Prometheus* which show the intense delight he received from such studies, and give back the impression with a beauty of poetical description peculiarly his own.’Author’s Preface

The Greek tragic writers, in selecting as their subject any portion of their national history or mythology, employed in their treatment of it a certain arbitrary discretion. They by no means conceived themselves bound to adhere to the common interpretation or to imitate in story as in title their rivals and predecessors. Such a system would have amounted to a resignation of those claims to preference over their competitors which incited the composition. The Agamemnonian story was exhibited on the Athenian theatre with as many variations as dramas.

I have presumed to employ a similar license. The *Prometheus Unbound* of Æschylus supposed the reconciliation of Jupiter with his victim as the price of the disclosure of the danger threatened to his empire by the consummation of his marriage with Thetis. Thetis, according to this view of the subject, was given in marriage to Peleus, and Prometheus, by the permission of Jupiter, delivered from his captivity by Hercules. Had I framed my story on this model, I should have done no more than have attempted to restore the lost drama of Æschylus; an ambition which, if my preference to this mode of treating the subject had incited me to cherish, the recollection of the high comparison such an attempt would challenge might well abate. But, in truth, I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind. The moral interest of the fable, which is so powerfully sustained by the sufferings and endurance of Prometheus, would be annihilated if we could conceive of him as unsaying his high language and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary. The only imaginary being, resembling in any degree Prometheus, is Satan; and Prometheus is, in my judgment, a more poetical character than Satan, because, in addition to courage, and majesty, and firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, he is susceptible of being described as exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandizement, which, in the hero of *Paradise Lost,* interfere

with the interest. The character of Satan engenders in the mind a pernicious casuistry which leads us to weigh his faults with his wrongs, and to excuse the former because the latter exceed all measure. In the minds of those who consider that magnificent fiction with a religious feeling it engenders something worse. But Prometheus is, as it were, the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends.

This Poem was chiefly written upon the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, among the flowery glades and thickets of odoriferous blossoming trees, which are extended in ever winding labyrinths upon its immense platforms and dizzy arches suspended in the air. The bright blue sky of Rome, and the effect of the vigorous awakening spring in that divinest climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication, were the inspiration of this drama.

The imagery which I have employed will be found, in many instances, to have been drawn from the operations of the human mind, or from those external actions by which they are expressed. This is unusual in modern poetry, although Dante and Shakespeare are full of instances of the same kind; Dante indeed more than any other poet, and with greater success. But the Greek poets, as writers to whom no resource of awakening the sympathy of their contemporaries was unknown, were in the habitual use of this power; and it is the study of their works (since a higher merit would probably be denied me) to which I am willing that my readers should impute this singularity.

One word is due in candor to the degree in which the study of contemporary writings may have tinged my composition, for such has been a topic of censure with regard to poems far more popular, and indeed more deservedly popular, than mine. It is impossible that any one, who inhabits the same age with such writers as those who stand in the foremost ranks of our own, can conscientiously assure himself that his language and tone of thought may not have been modified by the study of the productions of those extraordinary intellects. It is true that, not the spirit of their genius, but the forms in which it has manifested itself, are due less to the peculiarities of their own minds than to the peculiarity of the moral and intellectual condition of the minds among which they have been produced. Thus a number of writers possess the form, whilst they want the spirit of those whom, it is alleged, they imitate; because the former is the endowment of

the age in which they live, and the latter must be the uncommunicated lightning of their own mind.

The peculiar style of intense and comprehensive imagery which distinguishes the modern literature of England has not been, as a general power, the product of the imitation of any particular writer. The mass of capabilities remains at every period materially the same; the circumstances which awaken it to action perpetually change. If England were divided into forty republics, each equal in population and extent to Athens, there is no reason to suppose but that, under institutions not more perfect than those of Athens, each would produce philosophers and poets equal to those who (if we except Shakespeare) have never been surpassed. We owe the great writers of the golden age of our literature to that fervid awakening of the public mind which shook to dust the oldest and most oppressive form of the Christian religion. We owe Milton to the progress and development of the same spirit: the sacred Milton was, let it ever be remembered, a republican and a bold inquirer into morals and religion. The great writers of our own age are, we have reason to suppose, the companions and forerunners of some unimagined change in our social condition or the opinions which cement it. The cloud of mind is discharging its collected lightning, and the equilibrium between institutions and opinions is now restoring or is about to be restored.

As to imitation, poetry is a mimetic art. It creates, but it creates by combination and representation. Poetical abstractions are beautiful and new, not because the portions of which they are composed had no previous existence in the mind of man or in Nature, but because the whole produced by their combination has some intelligible and beautiful analogy with those sources of emotion and thought and with the contemporary condition of them. One great poet is a masterpiece of Nature which another not only ought to study but must study. He might as wisely and as easily determine that his mind should no longer be the mirror of all that is lovely in the visible universe as exclude from his contemplation the beautiful which exists in the writings of a great contemporary. The pretence of doing it would be a presumption in any but the greatest; the effect, even in him, would be strained, unnatural and ineffectual. A poet is the combined product of such internal powers as modify the nature of others, and of such external influences as excite and sustain these powers; he is not one, but both. Every man’s mind is, in this respect, modified by all the objects of Nature and art;

by every word and every suggestion which he ever admitted to act upon his consciousness; it is the mirror upon which all forms are reflected and in which they compose one form. Poets, not otherwise than philosophers, painters, sculptors and musicians, are, in one sense, the creators, and, in another, the creations, of their age. From this subjection the loftiest do not escape. There is a similarity between Homer and Hesiod, between Æschylus and Euripides, between Virgil and Horace, between Dante and Petrarch, between Shakespeare and Fletcher, between Dryden and Pope; each has a generic resemblance under which their specific distinctions are arranged. If this similarity be the result of imitation, I am willing to confess that I have imitated.

Let this opportunity be conceded to me of acknowledging that I have what a Scotch philosopher characteristically terms a ‘passion for reforming the world:’ what passion incited him to write and publish his book he omits to explain. For my part I had rather be damned with Plato and Lord Bacon than go to Heaven with Paley and Malthus. But it is a mistake to suppose that I dedicate my poetical compositions solely to the direct enforcement of reform, or that I consider them in any degree as containing a reasoned system on the theory of human life. Didactic poetry is my abhorrence; nothing can be equally well expressed in prose that is not tedious and supererogatory in verse. My purpose has hitherto been simply to familiarize the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence; aware that, until the mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust, although they would bear the harvest of his happiness. Should I live to accomplish what I purpose, that is, produce a systematical history of what appear to me to be the genuine elements of human society, let not the advocates of injustice and superstition flatter themselves that I should take Æschylus rather than Plato as my model.

The having spoken of myself with unaffected freedom will need little apology with the candid; and let the uncandid consider that they injure me less than their own hearts and minds by misrepresentation. Whatever talents a person may possess to amuse and instruct others, be they ever so inconsiderable, he is yet bound to exert them: if his attempt be ineffectual, let the punishment of an unaccomplished purpose have been sufficient; let

none trouble themselves to heap the dust of oblivion upon his efforts; the pile they raise will betray his grave which might otherwise have been unknown.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

PROMETHEUS. ASIA
DEMOGORGON. PANTHEA Oceanides.
JUPITER. IONE
THE EARTH. THE PHANTASM OF JUPITER.
OCEAN. THE SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.
APOLLO. THE SPIRIT OF THE MOON.
MERCURY. SPIRITS OF THE HOURS.
HERCULES. SPIRITS. ECHOES. FAUNS.
FURIES.

Act I

SCENE, *a Ravine of Icy Rocks in the Indian Caucasus.* PROMETHEUS *is discovered bound to the Precipice.* PANTEA *and* IONE *are seated at his feet. Time, Night. During the Scene morning slowly breaks.*

PROMETHEUS
MONARCH of Gods and Dæmons, and all Spirits
But One, who throng those bright and rolling worlds
Which Thou and I alone of living things
Behold with sleepless eyes! regard this Earth
Made multitudinous with thy slaves, whom thou
Requitest for knee-worship, prayer, and praise,
And toil, and hecatombs of broken hearts,
With fear and self-contempt and barren hope;
Whilst me, who am thy foe, eyeless in hate,
Hast thou made reign and triumph, to thy scorn,
O'er mine own misery and thy vain revenge.
Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours,
And moments aye divided by keen pangs
Till they seemed years, torture and solitude,
Scorn and despair — these are mine empire:
More glorious far than that which thou surveyest
From thine unenvied throne, O Mighty God!
Almighty, had I deigned to share the shame
Of thine ill tyranny, and hung not here
Nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain,
Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured; without herb,
Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life.
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, forever!

No change, no pause, no hope! Yet I endure.
I ask the Earth, have not the mountains felt?
I ask yon Heaven, the all-beholding Sun,
Has it not seen? The Sea, in storm or calm,
Heaven's ever-changing shadow, spread below,

Have its deaf waves not heard my agony?
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, forever!

The crawling glaciers pierce me with the spears
Of their moon-freezing crystals; the bright chains
Eat with their burning cold into my bones.
Heaven's wingèd hound, polluting from thy lips
His beak in poison not his own, tears up
My heart; and shapeless sights come wandering by,
The ghastly people of the realm of dream,
Mocking me; and the Earthquake-fiends are charged
To wrench the rivets from my quivering wounds
When the rocks split and close again behind;
While from their loud abysses howling throng
The genii of the storm, urging the rage
Of whirlwind, and afflict me with keen hail.
And yet to me welcome is day and night,
Whether one breaks the hoar-frost of the morn,
Or starry, dim, and slow, the other climbs
The leaden-colored east; for then they lead
The wingless, crawling hours, one among whom —
As some dark Priest hales the reluctant victim —
Shall drag thee, cruel King, to kiss the blood
From these pale feet, which then might trample thee
If they disdained not such a prostrate slave.
Disdain! Ah, no! I pity thee. What ruin
Will hunt thee undefended through the wide Heaven!
How will thy soul, cloven to its depth with terror,
Gape like a hell within! I speak in grief,
Not exultation, for I hate no more,
As then ere misery made me wise. The curse
Once breathed on thee I would recall. Ye Mountains,
Whose many-voicèd Echoes, through the mist
Of cataracts, flung the thunder of that spell!
Ye icy Springs, stagnant with wrinkling frost,
Which vibrated to hear me, and then crept
Shuddering through India! Thou serenest Air

Through which the Sun walks burning without beams!
And ye swift Whirlwinds, who on poisèd wings
Hung mute and moveless o'er yon hushed abyss,
As thunder, louder than your own, made rock
The orbèd world! If then my words had power,
Though I am changed so that aught evil wish
Is dead within; although no memory be
Of what is hate, let them not lose it now!
What was that curse? for ye all heard me speak.

FIRST VOICE: *from the Mountains*
Thrice three hundred thousand years
O'er the earthquake's couch we stood;
Oft, as men convulsed with fears,
We trembled in our multitude.

SECOND VOICE: *from the Springs*
Thunderbolts had parched our water,
We had been stained with bitter blood,
And had run mute, 'mid shrieks of slaughter
Through a city and a solitude.

THIRD VOICE: *from the Air*
I had clothed, since Earth uprose,
Its wastes in colors not their own,
And oft had my serene repose
Been cloven by many a rending groan.

FOURTH VOICE: *from the Whirlwinds*
We had soared beneath these mountains
Unresting ages; nor had thunder,
Nor yon volcano's flaming fountains,
Nor any power above or under
Ever made us mute with wonder.

FIRST VOICE
But never bowed our snowy crest
As at the voice of thine unrest.

SECOND VOICE
Never such a sound before
To the Indian waves we bore.
A pilot asleep on the howling sea
Leaped up from the deck in agony,
And heard, and cried, ‘Ah, woe is me!’
And died as mad as the wild waves be.

THIRD VOICE
By such dread words from Earth to Heaven
My still realm was never riven;
When its wound was closed, there stood
Darkness o’er the day like blood.

FOURTH VOICE
And we shrank back: for dreams of ruin
To frozen caves our flight pursuing
Made us keep silence — thus — and thus —
Though silence is a hell to us.

THE EARTH
The tongueless caverns of the craggy hills
Cried, ‘Misery!’ then; the hollow Heaven replied,
‘Misery!’ And the Ocean’s purple waves,
Climbing the land, howled to the lashing winds,
And the pale nations heard it, ‘Misery!’

PROMETHEUS
I hear a sound of voices; not the voice
Which I gave forth. Mother, thy sons and thou
Scorn him, without whose all-enduring will
Beneath the fierce omnipotence of Jove,
Both they and thou had vanished, like thin mist
Unrolled on the morning wind. Know ye not me,
The Titan? He who made his agony
The barrier to your else all-conquering foe?
O rock-embosomed lawns and snow-fed streams,
Now seen athwart frore vapors, deep below,

Through whose o'ershadowing woods I wandered once
With Asia, drinking life from her loved eyes;
Why scorns the spirit, which informs ye, now
To commune with me? me alone who checked,
As one who checks a fiend-drawn charioteer,
The falsehood and the force of him who reigns
Supreme, and with the groans of pining slaves
Fills your dim glens and liquid wildernesses:
Why answer ye not, still? Brethren!

THE EARTH
They dare not.

PROMETHEUS
Who dares? for I would hear that curse again.
Ha, what an awful whisper rises up!
'Tis scarce like sound; it tingles through the frame
As lightning tingles, hovering ere it strike.
Speak, Spirit! from thine inorganic voice
I only know that thou art moving near
And love. How cursed I him?

THE EARTH
How canst thou hear
Who knowest not the language of the dead?

PROMETHEUS
Thou art a living spirit; speak as they.

THE EARTH
I dare not speak like life, lest Heaven's fell King
Should hear, and link me to some wheel of pain
More torturing than the one whereon I roll.
Subtle thou art and good; and though the Gods
Hear not this voice, yet thou art more than God,
Being wise and kind: earnestly hearken now.

PROMETHEUS
Obscurely through my brain, like shadows dim,
Sweep awful thoughts, rapid and thick. I feel
Faint, like one mingled in entwining love;
Yet ‘t is not pleasure.

THE EARTH
No, thou canst not hear;
Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known
Only to those who die.

PROMETHEUS
And what art thou,
O melancholy Voice?

THE EARTH
I am the Earth,
Thy mother; she within whose stony veins,
To the last fibre of the loftiest tree
Whose thin leaves trembled in the frozen air,
Joy ran, as blood within a living frame,
When thou didst from her bosom, like a cloud
Of glory, arise, a spirit of keen joy!
And at thy voice her pining sons uplifted
Their prostrate brows from the polluting dust,
And our almighty Tyrant with fierce dread
Grew pale, until his thunder chained thee here.
Then — see those million worlds which burn and roll
Around us — their inhabitants beheld
My spherèd light wane in wide Heaven; the sea
Was lifted by strange tempest, and new fire
From earthquake-rifted mountains of bright snow
Shook its portentous hair beneath Heaven’s frown;
Lightning and Inundation vexed the plains;
Blue thistles bloomed in cities; foodless toads
Within voluptuous chambers panting crawled.
When Plague had fallen on man and beast and worm,

And Famine; and black blight on herb and tree;
And in the corn, and vines, and meadow-grass,
Teemed ineradicable poisonous weeds
Draining their growth, for my wan breast was dry
With grief, and the thin air, my breath, was stained
With the contagion of a mother's hate
Breathed on her child's destroyer; ay, I heard
Thy curse, the which, if thou rememberest not,
Yet my innumerable seas and streams,
Mountains, and caves, and winds, and yon wide air,
And the inarticulate people of the dead,
Preserve, a treasured spell. We meditate
In secret joy and hope those dreadful words,
But dare not speak them.

PROMETHEUS
Venerable mother!
All else who live and suffer take from thee
Some comfort; flowers, and fruits, and happy sounds,
And love, though fleeting; these may not be mine.
But mine own words, I pray, deny me not.

THE EARTH
They shall be told. Ere Babylon was dust,
The Magus Zoroaster, my dead child,
Met his own image walking in the garden.
That apparition, sole of men, he saw.
For know there are two worlds of life and death:
One that which thou beholdest; but the other
Is underneath the grave, where do inhabit
The shadows of all forms that think and live,
Till death unite them and they part no more;
Dreams and the light imaginings of men,
And all that faith creates or love desires,
Terrible, strange, sublime and beauteous shapes.
There thou art, and dost hang, a writhing shade,
'Mid whirlwind-peopled mountains; all the gods

Are there, and all the powers of nameless worlds,
Vast, sceptred phantoms; heroes, men, and beasts;
And Demogorgon, a tremendous gloom;
And he, the supreme Tyrant, on his throne
Of burning gold. Son, one of these shall utter
The curse which all remember. Call at will
Thine own ghost, or the ghost of Jupiter,
Hades or Typhon, or what mightier Gods
From all-prolific Evil, since thy ruin,
Have sprung, and trampled on my prostrate sons.
Ask, and they must reply: so the revenge
Of the Supreme may sweep through vacant shades,
As rainy wind through the abandoned gate
Of a fallen palace.

PROMETHEUS
Mother, let not aught
Of that which may be evil pass again
My lips, or those of aught resembling me.
Phantasm of Jupiter, arise, appear!

IONE
My wings are folded o'er mine ears;
My wings are crossèd o'er mine eyes;
Yet through their silver shade appears,
And through their lulling plumes arise,
A Shape, a throng of sounds.
May it be no ill to thee
O thou of many wounds!
Near whom, for our sweet sister's sake,
Ever thus we watch and wake.

PANTHEA
The sound is of whirlwind underground,
Earthquake, and fire, and mountains cloven;
The shape is awful, like the sound,
Clothed in dark purple, star-inwoven.

A sceptre of pale gold,
To stay steps proud, o'er the slow cloud,
His veinèd hand doth hold.
Cruel he looks, but calm and strong,
Like one who does, not suffers wrong.

PHANTASM OF JUPITER
Why have the secret powers of this strange world
Driven me, a frail and empty phantom, hither
On direst storms? What unaccustomed sounds
Are hovering on my lips, unlike the voice
With which our pallid race hold ghastly talk
In darkness? And, proud sufferer, who art thou?

PROMETHEUS
Tremendous Image! as thou art must be
He whom thou shadowest forth. I am his foe,
The Titan. Speak the words which I would hear,
Although no thought inform thine empty voice.

THE EARTH
Listen! And though your echoes must be mute,
Gray mountains, and old woods, and haunted springs,
Prophetic caves, and isle-surrounding streams,
Rejoice to hear what yet ye cannot speak.

PHANTASM
A spirit seizes me and speaks within;
It tears me as fire tears a thunder-cloud.

PANTHEA
See how he lifts his mighty looks! the Heaven
Darkens above.

IONE
He speaks! Oh, shelter me!

PROMETHEUS
I see the curse on gestures proud and cold,
And looks of firm defiance, and calm hate,
And such despair as mocks itself with smiles,
Written as on a scroll: yet speak! Oh, speak!

PHANTASM
Fiend, I defy thee! with a calm, fixed mind,
All that thou canst inflict I bid thee do;
Foul tyrant both of Gods and humankind,
One only being shalt thou not subdue.
Rain then thy plagues upon me here,
Ghastly disease, and frenzying fear;
And let alternate frost and fire
Eat into me, and be thine ire
Lightning, and cutting hail, and legioned forms
Of furies, driving by upon the wounding storms.

Ay, do thy worst! Thou art omnipotent.
O'er all things but thyself I gave thee power,
And my own will. Be thy swift mischiefs sent
To blast mankind, from yon ethereal tower.
Let thy malignant spirit move
In darkness over those I love;
On me and mine I imprecate
The utmost torture of thy hate;
And thus devote to sleepless agony,
This undeclining head while thou must reign on high.

But thou, who art the God and Lord: O thou
Who fillest with thy soul this world of woe,
To whom all things of Earth and Heaven do bow
In fear and worship — all-prevailing foe!
I curse thee! let a sufferer's curse
Clasp thee, his torturer, like remorse;
Till thine Infinity shall be
A robe of envenomed agony;

And thine Omnipotence a crown of pain,
To cling like burning gold round thy dissolving brain!

Heap on thy soul, by virtue of this Curse,
Ill deeds; then be thou damned, beholding good;
Both infinite as is the universe,
And thou, and thy self-torturing solitude.
An awful image of calm power
Though now thou sittest, let the hour
Come, when thou must appear to be
That which thou art internally;
And after many a false and fruitless crime,
Scorn track thy lagging fall through boundless space and time!

PROMETHEUS
Were these my words, O Parent?

THE EARTH
They were thine.

PROMETHEUS
It doth repent me; words are quick and vain;
Grief for awhile is blind, and so was mine.
I wish no living thing to suffer pain.

THE EARTH
Misery, oh, misery to me,
That Jove at length should vanquish thee!
Wail, howl aloud, Land and Sea,
The Earth's rent heart shall answer ye!
Howl, Spirits of the living and the dead,
Your refuge, your defence, lies fallen and vanquishèd!

FIRST ECHO
Lies fallen and vanquishèd!

SECOND ECHO
Fallen and vanquishèd!

IONE
Fear not: ‘t is but some passing spasm,
The Titan is unvanquished still.
But see, where through the azure chasm
Of yon forked and snowy hill,
Trampling the slant winds on high
With golden-sandalled feet, that glow
Under plumes of purple dye,
Like rose-ensanguined ivory,
A Shape comes now,
Stretching on high from his right hand
A serpent-cinctured wand.

PANTHEA
‘T is Jove’s world-wandering herald, Mercury.

IONE
And who are those with hydra tresses
And iron wings, that climb the wind,
Whom the frowning God represses, —
Like vapors steaming up behind,
Clanging loud, an endless crowd?

PANTHEA
These are Jove’s tempest-walking hounds,
Whom he gluts with groans and blood,
When charioted on sulphurous cloud
He bursts Heaven’s bounds.

IONE
Are they now led from the thin dead
On new pangs to be fed?

PANTHEA
The Titan looks as ever, firm, not proud.

FIRST FURY
Ha! I scent life!

SECOND FURY
Let me but look into his eyes!

THIRD FURY
The hope of torturing him smells like a heap
Of corpses to a death-bird after battle.

FIRST FURY
Darest thou delay, O Herald! take cheer, Hounds
Of Hell: what if the Son of Maia soon
Should make us food and sport — who can please long
The Omnipotent?

MERCURY
Back to your towers of iron,
And gnash, beside the streams of fire and wail,
Your foodless teeth. Geryon, arise! and Gorgon,
Chimæra, and thou Sphinx, subtlest of fiends,
Who ministered to Thebes Heaven's poisoned wine,
Unnatural love, and more unnatural hate:
These shall perform your task.

FIRST FURY
Oh, mercy! mercy!
We die with our desire! drive us not back!

MERCURY
Crouch then in silence.
Awful Sufferer!
To thee unwilling, most unwillingly
I come, by the great Father's will driven down,
To execute a doom of new revenge.
Alas! I pity thee, and hate myself
That I can do no more; aye from thy sight
Returning, for a season, Heaven seems Hell,
So thy worn form pursues me night and day,
Smiling reproach. Wise art thou, firm and good,
But vainly wouldst stand forth alone in strife

Against the Omnipotent; as yon clear lamps,
That measure and divide the weary years
From which there is no refuge, long have taught
And long must teach. Even now thy Torturer arms
With the strange might of unimagined pains
The powers who scheme slow agonies in Hell,
And my commission is to lead them here,
Or what more subtle, foul, or savage fiends
People the abyss, and leave them to their task.
Be it not so! there is a secret known
To thee, and to none else of living things,
Which may transfer the sceptre of wide Heaven,
The fear of which perplexes the Supreme.
Clothe it in words, and bid it clasp his throne
In intercession; bend thy soul in prayer,
And like a suppliant in some gorgeous fane,
Let the will kneel within thy haughty heart,
For benefits and meek submission tame
The fiercest and the mightiest.

PROMETHEUS
Evil minds
Change good to their own nature. I gave all
He has; and in return he chains me here
Years, ages, night and day; whether the Sun
Split my parched skin, or in the moony night
The crystal-wingèd snow cling round my hair;
Whilst my belovèd race is trampled down
By his thought-executing ministers.
Such is the tyrant's recompense. 'T is just.
He who is evil can receive no good;
And for a world bestowed, or a friend lost,
He can feel hate, fear, shame; not gratitude.
He but requites me for his own misdeed.
Kindness to such is keen reproach, which breaks
With bitter stings the light sleep of Revenge.
Submission thou dost know I cannot try.

For what submission but that fatal word,
The death-seal of mankind's captivity,
Like the Sicilian's hair-suspended sword,
Which trembles o'er his crown, would he accept,
Or could I yield? Which yet I will not yield.
Let others flatter Crime where it sis throned
In brief Omnipotence; secure are they;
For Justice, when triumphant, will weep down
Pity, not punishment, on her own wrongs,
Too much avenged by those who err. I wait,
Enduring thus, the retributive hour
Which since we spake is even nearer now.
But hark, the hell-hounds clamor: fear delay:
Behold! Heaven lowers under thy Father's frown.

MERCURY
Oh, that we might be spared; I to inflict,
And thou to suffer! Once more answer me.
Thou knowest not the period of Jove's power?

PROMETHEUS
I know but this, that it must come.

MERCURY
Alas!
Thou canst not count thy years to come of pain!

PROMETHEUS
They last while Jove must reign; nor more, nor less
Do I desire or fear.

MERCURY
Yet pause, and plunge
Into Eternity, where recorded time,
Even all that we imagine, age on age,
Seems but a point, and the reluctant mind
Flags wearily in its unending flight,
Till it sink, dizzy, blind, lot, shelterless;

Perchance it has not numbered the slow years
Which thou must spend in torture, unreprieved?

PROMETHEUS
Perchance no thought can count them, yet they pass.

MERCURY
If thou mightst dwell among the Gods the while,
Lapped in voluptuous joy?

PROMETHEUS
I would not quit
This bleak ravine, these unrepentant pains.

MERCURY
Alas! I wonder at, yet pity thee.

PROMETHEUS
Pity the self-despising slaves of Heaven,
Not me, within whose mind sits peace serene,
As light in the sun, throned. How vain is talk!
Call up the fiends.

IONE
Oh, sister, look! White fire
Has cloven to the roots yon huge snow-loaded cedar;
How fearfully God's thunder howls behind!

MERCURY
I must obey his words and thine. Alas!
Most heavily remorse hangs at my heart!

PANTHEA
See where the child of Heaven, with wingèd feet,
Runs down the slanted sunlight of the dawn.

IONE
Dear sister, close thy plumes over thine eyes

Lest thou behold and die; they come — they come —
Blackening the birth of day with countless wings,
And hollow underneath, like death.

FIRST FURY
Prometheus!

SECOND FURY
Immortal Titan!

THIRD FURY
Champion of Heaven's slaves!

PROMETHEUS
He whom some dreadful voice invokes is here,
Prometheus, the chained Titan. Horrible forms,
What and who are ye? Never yet there came
Phantasms so foul through monster-teeming Hell
From the all-miscreative brain of Jove.
Whilst I behold such execrable shapes,
Methinks I grow like what I contemplate,
And laugh and stare in loathsome sympathy.

FIRST FURY
We are the ministers of pain, and fear,
And disappointment, and mistrust, and hate,
And clinging crime; and as lean dogs pursue
Through wood and lake some struck and sobbing fawn,
We track all things that weep, and bleed, and live,
When the great King betrays them to our will.

PROMETHEUS
O many fearful natures in one name,
I know ye; and these lakes and echoes know
The darkness and the clangor of your wings!
But why more hideous than your loathèd selves
Gather ye up in legions from the deep?

SECOND FURY
We knew not that. Sisters, rejoice, rejoice!

PROMETHEUS
Can aught exult in its deformity?

SECOND FURY
The beauty of delight makes lovers glad,
Gazing on one another: so are we.
As from the rose which the pale priestess kneels
To gather for her festal crown of flowers
The aërial crimson falls, flushing her cheek,
So from our victim's destined agony
The shade which is our form invests us round;
Else we are shapeless as our mother Night.

PROMETHEUS
I laugh your power, and his who sent you here,
To lowest scorn. Pour forth the cup of pain.

FIRST FURY
Thou thinkest we will rend thee bone from bone
And nerve from nerve, working like fire within?

PROMETHEUS
Pain is my element, as hate is thine;
Ye rend me now; I care not.

SECOND FURY
Dost imagine
We will but laugh into thy lidless eyes?

PROMETHEUS
I weigh not what ye do, but what ye suffer,
Being evil. Cruel was the power which called
You, or aught else so wretched, into light.

THIRD FURY
Thou think'st we will live through thee, one by one,
Like animal life, and though we can obscure not
The soul which burns within, that we will dwell
Beside it, like a vain loud multitude,
Vexing the self-content of wisest men;
That we will be dread thought beneath thy brain,
And foul desire round thine astonished heart,
And blood within thy labyrinthine veins
Crawling like agony?

PROMETHEUS
Why, ye are thus now;
Yet am I king over myself, and rule
The torturing and conflicting throngs within,
As Jove rules you when Hell grows mutinous.

CHORUS OF FURIES
From the ends of the earth, from the ends of the earth,
Where the night has its grave and the morning its birth,
Come, come, come!
O ye who shake hills with the scream of your mirth
When cities sink howling in ruin; and ye
Who with wingless footsteps trample the sea,
And close upon Shipwreck and Famine's track
Sit chattering with joy on the foodless wreck;
Come, come, come!
Leave the bed, low, cold, and red,
Strewed beneath a nation dead;
Leave the hatred, as in ashes
Fire is left for future burning;
It will burst in bloodier flashes
When ye stir it, soon returning;
Leave the self-contempt implanted
In young spirits, sense-enchanted,
Misery's yet unkindled fuel;
Leave Hell's secrets half unchanted

To the maniac dreamer; cruel
More than ye can be with hate
Is he with fear.
Come, come, come!
We are steaming up from Hell's wide gate
And we burden the blasts of the atmosphere,
But vainly we toil till ye come here.

IONE.
Sister, I hear the thunder of new wings.

PANTHEA
These solid mountains quiver with the sound
Even as the tremulous air; their shadows make
The space within my plumes more black than night.

FIRST FURY
Your call was as a wingèd car,
Driven on whirlwinds fast and far;
It rapt us from red gulfs of war.

SECOND FURY
From wide cities, famine-wasted;

THIRD FURY
Groans half heard, and blood untasted;

FOURTH FURY
Kingly conclaves stern and cold,
Where blood with gold is bought and sold;

FIFTH FURY
From the furnace, white and hot,
In which —

A FURY
Speak not; whisper not;
I know all that ye would tell,

But to speak might break the spell
Which must bend the Invincible,
The stern of thought;
He yet defies the deepest power of Hell.

FURY
Tear the veil!

ANOTHER FURY
It is torn.

CHORUS
The pale stars of the morn
Shine on a misery, dire to be borne.
Dost thou faint, mighty Titan? We laugh thee to scorn.
Dost thou boast the clear knowledge thou waken'dst for man?
Then was kindled within him a thirst which outran
Those perishing waters; a thirst of fierce fever,
Hope, love, doubt, desire, which consume him forever.
One came forth of gentle worth,
Smiling on the sanguine earth;
His words outlived him, like swift poison
Withering up truth, peace, and pity.
Look! where round the wide horizon
Many a million-peopled city
Vomits smoke in the bright air!
Mark that outcry of despair!
'T is his mild and gentle ghost
Wailing for the faith he kindled.
Look again! the flames almost
To a glow-worm's lamp have dwindled;
The survivors round the embers
Gather in dread.
Joy, joy, joy!
Past ages crowd on thee, but each one remembers,
And the future is dark, and the present is spread
Like a pillow of thorns for thy slumberless head.

SEMICHORUS I
Drops of bloody agony flow
From his white and quivering brow.
Grant a little respite now.
See! a disenchanted nation
Spring like day from desolation;
To Truth its state is dedicate,
And Freedom leads it forth, her mate;
A legioned band of linkèd brothers,
Whom Love calls children —

SEMICHORUS II
'T is another's.
See how kindred murder kin!
'T is the vintage-time for Death and Sin;
Blood, like new wine, bubbles within;
Till Despair smothers
The struggling world, which slaves and tyrants win.
[*All the* FURIES *vanish, except one.*

IONE
Hark, sister! what a low yet dreadful groan
Quite unsuppressed is tearing up the heart
Of the good Titan, as storms tear the deep,
And beasts hear the sea moan in inland caves.
Darest thou observe how the fiends torture him?

PANTHEA
Alas! I looked forth twice, but will no more.

IONE
What didst thou see?

PANTHEA
A woful sight: a youth
With patient looks nailed to a crucifix.

IONE
What next?

PANTHEA
The heaven around, the earth below,
Was peopled with thick shapes of human death,
All horrible, and wrought by human hands;
And some appeared the work of human hearts,
For men were slowly killed by frowns and smiles;
And other sights too foul to speak and live
Were wandering by. Let us not tempt worse fear
By looking forth; those groans are grief enough.

FURY
Behold an emblem: those who do endure
Deep wrongs for man, and scorn, and chains, but heap
Thousand-fold torment on themselves and him.

PROMETHEUS
Remit the anguish of that lighted stare;
Close those wan lips; let that thorn-wounded brow
Stream not with blood; it mingles with thy tears!
Fix, fix those tortured orbs in peace and death,
So thy sick throes shake not that crucifix,
So those pale fingers play not with thy gore.
Oh, horrible! Thy name I will not speak —
It hath become a curse. I see, I see
The wise, the mild, the lofty, and the just,
Whom thy slaves hate for being like to thee,
Some hunted by foul lies from their heart's home,
An early-chosen, late-lamented home,
As hooded ounces cling to the driven hind;
Some linked to corpses in unwholesome cells;
Some — hear I not the multitude laugh loud? —
Impaled in lingering fire; and mighty realms
Float by my feet, like sea-uprooted isles,

Whose sons are kneaded down in common blood
By the red light of their own burning homes.

FURY
Blood thou canst see, and fire; and canst hear groans:
Worse things unheard, unseen, remain behind.

PROMETHEUS
Worse?

FURY
In each human heart terror survives
The ruin it has gorged: the loftiest fear
All that they would disdain to think were true.
Hypocrisy and custom make their minds
The fanes of many a worship, now outworn.
They dare not devise good for man's estate,
And yet they know not that they do not dare.
The good want power, but to weep barren tears.
The powerful goodness want; worse need for them.
The wise want love; and those who love want wisdom;
And all best things are thus confused to ill.
Many are strong and rich, and would be just,
But live among their suffering fellow-men
As if none felt; they know not what they do.

PROMETHEUS
Thy words are like a cloud of wingèd snakes;
And yet I pity those they torture not.

FURY
Thou pitiest them? I speak no more!
[*Vanishes.*

PROMETHEUS
Ah woe!
Ah woe! Alas! pain, pain ever, forever!
I close my tearless eyes, but see more clear

Thy works within my woe-illumèd mind,
Thou subtle tyrant! Peace is in the grave.
The grave hides all things beautiful and good.
I am a God and cannot find it there,
Nor would I seek it; for, though dread revenge,
This is defeat, fierce king, not victory.
The sights with which thou torturest gird my soul
With new endurance, till the hour arrives
When they shall be no types of things which are.

PANTHEA
Alas! what sawest thou?

PROMETHEUS
There are two woes —
To speak and to behold; thou spare me one.
Names are there, Nature's sacred watchwords, they
Were borne aloft in bright emblazonry;
The nations thronged around, and cried aloud,
As with one voice, Truth, Liberty, and Love!
Suddenly fierce confusion fell from heaven
Among them; there was strife, deceit, and fear;
Tyrants rushed in, and did divide the spoil.
This was the shadow of the truth I saw.

THE EARTH
I felt thy torture, son, with such mixed joy
As pain and virtue give. To cheer thy state
I bid ascend those subtle and fair spirits,
Whose homes are the dim caves of human thought,
And who inhabit, as birds wing the wind,
Its world-surrounding ether; they behold
Beyond that twilight realm, as in a glass,
The future; may they speak comfort to thee!

PANTHEA
Look, sister, where a troop of spirits gather,

Like flocks of clouds in spring's delightful weather,
Thronging in the blue air!

IONE
And see! more come,
Like fountain-vapors when the winds are dumb,
That climb up the ravine in scattered lines.
And hark! is it the music of the pines?
Is it the lake? Is it the waterfall?

PANTHEA
'T is something sadder, sweeter far than all.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS
From unremembered ages we
Gentle guides and guardians be
Of heaven-oppressed mortality;
And we breathe, and sicken not,
The atmosphere of human thought:
Be it dim, and dank, and gray,
Like a storm-extinguished day,
Travelled o'er by dying gleams;
Be it bright as all between
Cloudless skies and windless streams,
Silent, liquid, and serene;
As the birds within the wind,
As the fish within the wave,
As the thoughts of man's own mind
Float through all above the grave;
We make there our liquid lair,
Voyaging cloudlike and unpent
Through the boundless element:
Thence we bear the prophecy
Which begins and ends in thee!

IONE
More yet come, one by one; the air around them
Looks radiant as the air around a star.

FIRST SPIRIT
On a battle-trumpet's blast
I fled hither, fast, fast, fast,
'Mid the darkness upward cast.
From the dust of creeds outworn,
From the tyrant's banner torn,
Gathering round me, onward borne,
There was mingled many a cry —
Freedom! Hope! Death! Victory!
Till they faded through the sky;
And one sound above, around,
One sound beneath, around, above,
Was moving; 't was the soul of love;
'T was the hope, the prophecy,
Which begins and ends in thee.

SECOND SPIRIT
A rainbow's arch stood on the sea,
Which rocked beneath, immovably;
And the triumphant storm did flee,
Like a conqueror, swift and proud,
Begirt with many a captive cloud,
A shapeless, dark and rapid crowd,
Each by lightning riven in half.
I heard the thunder hoarsely laugh.
Mighty fleets were strewn like chaff
And spread beneath a hell of death
O'er the white waters. I alit
On a great ship lightning-split,
And speeded hither on the sigh
Of one who gave an enemy
His plank, then plunged aside to die.

THIRD SPIRIT
I sat beside a sage's bed,
And the lamp was burning red
Near the book where he had fed,

When a Dream with plumes of flame
To his pillow hovering came,
And I knew it was the same
Which had kindled long ago
Pity, eloquence, and woe;
And the world awhile below
Wore the shade its lustre made.
It has borne me here as fleet
As Desire's lightning feet;
I must ride it back ere morrow,
Or the sage will wake in sorrow.

FOURTH SPIRIT
On a poet's lips I slept
Dreaming like a love-adept
In the sound his breathing kept;
Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses,
But feeds on the aërial kisses
Of shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses.
He will watch from dawn to gloom
The lake-reflected sun illume
The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,
Nor heed nor see what things they be;
But from these create he can
Forms more real than living man,
Nurslings of immortality!
One of these awakened me,
And I sped to succor thee.

IONE
Behold'st thou not two shapes from the east and west
Come, as two doves to one belovèd nest,
Twin nurslings of the all-sustaining air,
On swift still wings glide down the atmosphere?
And, hark! their sweet sad voices! 't is despair
Mingled with love and then dissolved in sound.

PANTHEA
Canst thou speak, sister? all my words are drowned.

IONE
Their beauty gives me voice. See how they float
On their sustaining wings of skyey grain,
Orange and azure deepening into gold!
Their soft smiles light the air like a star's fire.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS
Hast thou beheld the form of Love?

FIFTH SPIRIT
As over wide dominions
I sped, like some swift cloud that wings the wide air's wildernesses,
That planet-crested Shape swept by on lightning-braided pinions,
Scattering the liquid joy of life from his ambrosial tresses.
His footsteps paved the world with light; but as I passed 't was fading,
And hollow Ruin yawned behind; great sages bound in madness,
And headless patriots, and pale youths who perished, unupbraiding,
Gleamed in the night. I wandered o'er, till thou, O King of sadness,
Turned by thy smile the worst I saw to recollected gladness.

SIXTH SPIRIT
Ah, sister! Desolation is a delicate thing:
It walks not on the earth, it floats not on the air,
But treads with killing footstep, and fans with silent wing
The tender hopes which in their hearts the best and gentlest bear;
Who, soothed to false repose by the fanning plumes above
And the music-stirring motion of its soft and busy feet,
Dream visions of aërial joy, and call the monster, Love,
And wake, and find the shadow Pain, as he whom now we greet.

CHORUS
Though Ruin now Love's shadow be,

Following him, destroyingly,
On Death's white and wingèd steed,
Which the fleetest cannot flee,
Trampling down both flower and weed,
Man and beast, and foul and fair,
Like a tempest through the air;
Thou shalt quell this horseman grim,
Woundless though in heart or limb.

PROMETHEUS
Spirits! how know ye this shall be?

CHORUS
In the atmosphere we breathe,
As buds grow red, when the snow-storms flee,
From spring gathering up beneath,
Whose mild winds shake the elder-brake,
And the wandering herdsmen know
That the white-thorn soon will blow:
Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Peace,
When they struggle to increase,
Are to us as soft winds be
To shepherd boys, the prophecy
Which begins and ends in thee.

IONE
Where are the Spirits fled?

PANTHEA
Only a sense
Remains of them, like the omnipotence
Of music, when the inspired voice and lute
Languish, ere yet the responses are mute,
Which through the deep and labyrinthine soul,
Like echoes through long caverns, wind and roll.

PROMETHEUS
How fair these air-born shapes! and yet I feel

Most vain all hope but love; and thou art far,
Asia! who, when my being overflowed,
Wert like a golden chalice to bright wine
Which else had sunk into the thirsty dust.
All things are still. Alas! how heavily
This quiet morning weighs upon my heart;
Though I should dream I could even sleep with grief,
If slumber were denied not. I would fain
Be what it is my destiny to be,
The saviour and the strength of suffering man,
Or sink into the original gulf of things.
There is no agony, and no solace left;
Earth can console, Heaven can torment no more.

PANTHEA
Hast thou forgotten one who watches thee
The cold dark night, and never sleeps but when
The shadow of thy spirit falls on her?

PROMETHEUS
I said all hope was vain but love; thou lovest.

PANTHEA
Deeply in truth; but the eastern star looks white,
And Asia waits in that far Indian vale,
The scene of her sad exile; rugged once
And desolate and frozen, like this ravine;
But now invested with fair flowers and herbs,
And haunted by sweet airs and sounds, which flow
Among the woods and waters, from the ether
Of her transforming presence, which would fade
If it were mingled not with thine. Farewell!

Act II

SCENE I. — *Morning. A lovely Vale in the Indian Caucasus.* ASIA, *alone.*

ASIA
FROM all the blasts of heaven thou hast descended;
Yes, like a spirit, like a thought, which makes
Unwonted tears throng to the horny eyes,
And beatings haunt the desolated heart,
Which should have learned repose; thou hast descended
Cradled in tempests; thou dost wake, O Spring!
O child of many winds! As suddenly
Thou comest as the memory of a dream,
Which now is sad because it hath been sweet;
Like genius, or like joy which riseth up
As from the earth, clothing with golden clouds
The desert of our life.
This is the season, this the day, the hour;
At sunrise thou shouldst come, sweet sister mine,
Too long desired, too long delaying, come!
How like death-worms the wingless moments crawl!
The point of one white star is quivering still
Deep in the orange light of widening morn
Beyond the purple mountains; through a chasm
Of wind-divided mist the darker lake
Reflects it; now it wanes; it gleams again
As the waves fade, and as the burning threads
Of woven cloud unravel in pale air;
'T is lost! and through yon peaks of cloudlike snow
The roseate sunlight quivers; hear I not
The Æolian music of her sea-green plumes
Winnowing the crimson dawn?

PANTHEA *enters*
I feel, I see
Those eyes which burn through smiles that fade in tears,

Like stars half-quenched in mists of silver dew.
Belovèd and most beautiful, who wearest
The shadow of that soul by which I live,
How late thou art! the spherèd sun had climbed
The sea; my heart was sick with hope, before
The printless air felt thy belated plumes.

PANTHEA
Pardon, great Sister! but my wings were faint
With the delight of a remembered dream,
As are the noontide plumes of summer winds
Satiate with sweet flowers. I was wont to sleep
Peacefully, and awake refreshed and calm,
Before the sacred Titan's fall and thy
Unhappy love had made, through use and pity,
Both love and woe familiar to my heart
As they had grown to thine: erewhile I slept
Under the glaucous caverns of old Ocean
Within dim bowers of green and purple moss,
Our young Ione's soft and milky arms
Locked then, as now, behind my dark, moist hair,
While my shut eyes and cheek were pressed within
The folded depth of her life-breathing bosom:
But not as now, since I am made the wind
Which fails beneath the music that I bear
Of thy most wordless converse; since dissolved
Into the sense with which love talks, my rest
Was troubled and yet sweet; my waking hours
Too full of care and pain.

ASIA
Lift up thine eyes,
And let me read thy dream.

PANTHEA
As I have said,
With our sea-sister at his feet I slept.

The mountain mists, condensing at our voice
Under the moon, had spread their snowy flakes,
From the keen ice shielding our linkèd sleep.
Then two dreams came. One I remember not.
But in the other his pale wound-worn limbs
Fell from Prometheus, and the azure night
Grew radiant with the glory of that form
Which lives unchanged within, and his voice fell
Like music which makes giddy the dim brain,
Faint with intoxication of keen joy:
'Sister of her whose footsteps pave the world
With loveliness — more fair than aught but her,
Whose shadow thou art — lift thine eyes on me.'
I lifted them; the overpowering light
Of that immortal shape was shadowed o'er
By love; which, from his soft and flowing limbs,
And passion-parted lips, and keen, faint eyes,
Steamed forth like vaporous fire; an atmosphere
Which wrapped me in its all-dissolving power,
As the warm ether of the morning sun
Wraps ere it drinks some cloud of wandering dew.
I saw not, heard not, moved not, only felt
His presence flow and mingle through my blood
Till it became his life, and his grew mine,
And I was thus absorbed, until it passed,
And like the vapors when the sun sinks down,
Gathering again in drops upon the pines,
And tremulous as they, in the deep night
My being was condensed; and as the rays
Of thought were slowly gathered, I could hear
His voice, whose accents lingered ere they died
Like footsteps of weak melody; thy name
Among the many sounds alone I heard
Of what might be articulate; though still
I listened through the night when sound was none.
Ione wakened then, and said to me:
'Canst thou divine what troubles me tonight?

I always knew what I desired before,
Nor ever found delight to wish in vain.
But now I cannot tell thee what I seek;
I know not; something sweet, since it is sweet
Even to desire; it is thy sport, false sister;
Thou hast discovered some enchantment old,
Whose spells have stolen my spirit as I slept
And mingled it with thine; for when just now
We kissed, I felt within thy parted lips
The sweet air that sustained me; and the warmth
Of the life-blood, for loss of which I faint,
Quivered between our intertwining arms.'
I answered not, for the Eastern star grew pale,
But fled to thee.

ASIA
Thou speakest, but thy words
Are as the air; I feel them not. Oh, lift
Thine eyes, that I may read his written soul!

PANTHEA
I lift them, though they droop beneath the load
Of that they would express; what canst thou see
But thine own fairest shadow imaged there?

ASIA
Thine eyes are like the deep, blue, boundless heaven
Contracted to two circles underneath
Their long, fine lashes; dark, far, measureless,
Orb within orb, and line through line inwoven.

PANTHEA
Why lookest thou as if a spirit passed?

ASIA
There is a change; beyond their inmost depth
I see a shade, a shape: 't is He, arrayed
In the soft light of his own smiles, which spread

Like radiance from the cloud-surrounded moon.
Prometheus, it is thine! depart not yet!
Say not those smiles that we shall meet again
Within that bright pavilion which their beams
Shall build on the waste world? The dream is told.
What shape is that between us? Its rude hair
Roughens the wind that lifts it, its regard
Is wild and quick, yet ‘t is a thing of air,
For through its gray robe gleams the golden dew
Whose stars the noon has quenched not.

DREAM
Follow! Follow!

PANTHEA
It is mine other dream.

ASIA
It disappears.

PANTHEA
It passes now into my mind. Methought
As we sate here, the flower-infolding buds
Burst on yon lightning-blasted almond tree;
When swift from the white Scythian wilderness
A wind swept forth wrinkling the Earth with frost;
I looked, and all the blossoms were blown down;
But on each leaf was stamped, as the blue bells
Of Hyacinth tell Apollo’s written grief,
OH, FOLLOW, FOLLOW!

ASIA
As you speak, your words
Fill, pause by pause, my own forgotten sleep
With shapes. Methought among the lawns together
We wandered, underneath the young gray dawn,
And multitudes of dense white fleecy clouds
Were wandering in thick flocks along the mountains,

Shepherded by the slow, unwilling wind;
And the white dew on the new-bladed grass,
Just piercing the dark earth, hung silently;
And there was more which I remember not;
But on the shadows of the morning clouds,
Athwart the purple mountain slope, was written
FOLLOW, OH, FOLLOW! as they vanished by;
And on each herb, from which Heaven's dew had fallen,
The like was stamped, as with a withering fire;
A wind arose among the pines; it shook
The clinging music from their boughs, and then
Low, sweet, faint sounds, like the farewell of ghosts,
Were heard: OH, FOLLOW, FOLLOW, FOLLOW ME!
And then I said, 'Panthea, look on me.'
But in the depth of those belovèd eyes
Still I saw, FOLLOW, FOLLOW!

ECHO
Follow, follow!

PANTHEA
The crags, this clear spring morning, mock our voices,
As they were spirit-tongued.

ASIA
It is some being
Around the crags. What fine clear sounds!
Oh, list!

ECHOES, *unseen*
Echoes we: listen!
We cannot stay:
As dew-stars glisten
Then fade away —
Child of Ocean!

ASIA
Hark! Spirits speak. The liquid responses

Of their aërial tongues yet sound.

PANTHEA
I hear.

ECHOES
Oh, follow, follow,
As our voice recedeth
Through the caverns hollow,
Where the forest spreadeth;
(*More distant*)
Oh, follow, follow!
Through the caverns hollow,
As the song floats thou pursue,
Where the wild bee never flew,
Through the noontide darkness deep,
By the odor-breathing sleep
Of faint night-flowers, and the waves
At the fountain-lighted caves,
While our music, wild and sweet,
Mocks thy gently falling feet,
Child of Ocean!

ASIA
Shall we pursue the sound? It grows more faint
And distant.

PANTHEA
List! the strain floats nearer now.

ECHOES
In the world unknown
Sleeps a voice unspoken;
By thy step alone
Can its rest be broken;
Child of Ocean!

ASIA
How the notes sink upon the ebbing wind!

ECHOES
Oh, follow, follow!
Through the caverns hollow,
As the song floats thou pursue,
By the woodland noontide dew;
By the forests, lakes, and fountains,
Through the many-folded mountains;
To the rents, and gulfs, and chasms,
Where the Earth reposed from spasms,
On the day when He and thou
Parted, to commingle now;
Child of Ocean!

ASIA
Come, sweet Panthea, link thy hand in mine,
And follow, ere the voices fade away.

SCENE II. — *A Forest intermingled with Rocks and Caverns.* ASIA *and* PANTHEA *pass into it. Two young Fauns are sitting on a Rock, listening.*

SEMICHORUS I OF SPIRITS
The path through which that lovely twain
Have passed, by cedar, pine, and yew,
And each dark tree that ever grew,
Is curtained out from Heaven's wide blue;
Nor sun, nor moon, nor wind, nor rain,
Can pierce its interwoven bowers,
Nor aught, save where some cloud of dew,
Drifted along the earth-creeping breeze
Between the trunks of the hoar trees,
Hangs each a pearl in the pale flowers
Of the green laurel blown anew,
And bends, and then fades silently,
One frail and fair anemone;
Or when some star of many a one

That climbs and wanders through steep night,
Has found the cleft through which alone
Beams fall from high those depths upon, —
Ere it is borne away, away,
By the swift Heavens that cannot stay,
It scatters drops of golden light,
Like lines of rain that ne'er unite;
And the gloom divine is all around;
And underneath is the mossy ground.

SEMICHORUS II
There the voluptuous nightingales,
Are awake through all the broad noon day:
When one with bliss or sadness fails,
And through the windless ivy-boughs,
Sick with sweet love, droops dying away
On its mate's music-panting bosom;
Another from the swinging blossom,
Watching to catch the languid close
Of the last strain, then lifts on high
The wings of the weak melody,
Till some new strain of feeling bear
The song, and all the woods are mute;
When there is heard through the dim air
The rush of wings, and rising there,
Like many a lake-surrounded flute,
Sounds overflow the listener's brain
So sweet, that joy is almost pain.

SEMICHORUS I
There those enchanted eddies play
Of echoes, music-tongued, which draw,
By Demogorgon's mighty law,
With melting rapture, or sweet awe,
All spirits on that secret way,
As inland boats are driven to Ocean
Down streams made strong with mountain-thaw;

And first there comes a gentle sound
To those in talk or slumber bound,
And wakes the destined; soft emotion
Attracts, impels them; those who saw
Say from the breathing earth behind
There steams a plume-uplifting wind
Which drives them on their path, while they
Believe their own swift wings and feet
The sweet desires within obey;
And so they float upon their way,
Until, still sweet, but loud and strong,
The storm of sound is driven along,
Sucked up and hurrying; as they fleet
Behind, its gathering billows meet
And to the fatal mountain bear
Like clouds amid the yielding air.

FIRST FAUN
Canst thou imagine where those spirits live
Which make such delicate music in the woods?
We haunt within the least frequented caves
And closest coverts, and we know these wilds,
Yet never meet them, though we hear them oft:
Where may they hide themselves?

SECOND FAUN
'T is hard to tell;
I have heard those more skilled in spirits say,
The bubbles, which the enchantment of the sun
Sucks from the pale faint water-flowers that pave
The oozy bottom of clear lakes and pools,
Are the pavilions where such dwell and float
Under the green and golden atmosphere
Which noontide kindles through the woven leaves;
And when these burst, and the thin fiery air,
The which they breathed within those lucent domes,
Ascends to flow like meteors through the night,

They ride on them, and rein their headlong speed,
And bow their burning crests, and glide in fire
Under the waters of the earth again.

FIRST FAUN
If such live thus, have others other lives,
Under pink blossoms or within the bells
Of meadow flowers or folded violets deep,
Or on their dying odors, when they die,
Or in the sunlight of the spherèd dew?

SECOND FAUN
Ay, many more which we may well divine.
But should we stay to speak, noontide would come,
And thwart Silenus find his goats undrawn,
And grudge to sing those wise and lovely songs
Of Fate, and Chance, and God, and Chaos old,
And Love and the chained Titan's woful doom,
And how he shall be loosed, and make the earth
One brotherhood; delightful strains which cheer
Our solitary twilights, and which charm
To silence the unenvying nightingales.

SCENE III. — *A Pinnacle of Rock among Mountains.* ASIA *and* PANTHEA.

PANTHEA
Hither the sound has borne us — to the realm
Of Demogorgon, and the mighty portal,
Like a volcano's meteor-breathing chasm,
Whence the oracular vapor is hurled up
Which lonely men drink wandering in their youth,
And call truth, virtue, love, genius, or joy,
That maddening wine of life, whose dregs they drain
To deep intoxication; and uplift,
Like Mænads who cry loud, Evoe! Evoe!
The voice which is contagion to the world.

ASIA
Fit throne for such a Power! Magnificent!
How glorious art thou, Earth! and if thou be
The shadow of some spirit lovelier still,
Though evil stain its work, and it should be
Like its creation, weak yet beautiful,
I could fall down and worship that and thee.
Even now my heart adoreth. Wonderful!
Look, sister, ere the vapor dim thy brain:
Beneath is a wide plain of billowy mist,
As a lake, paving in the morning sky,
With azure waves which burst in silver light,
Some Indian vale. Behold it, rolling on
Under the curdling winds, and islanding
The peak whereon we stand, midway, around,
Encinctured by the dark and blooming forests,
Dim twilight-lawns, and stream-illumined caves,
And wind-enchanted shapes of wandering mist;
And far on high the keen sky-cleaving mountains
From icy spires of sunlike radiance fling
The dawn, as lifted Ocean's dazzling spray,
From some Atlantic islet scattered up,
Spangles the wind with lamp-like waterdrops.
The vale is girdled with their walls, a howl
Of cataracts from their thaw-cloven ravines
Satiates the listening wind, continuous, vast,
Awful as silence. Hark! the rushing snow!
The sun-awakened avalanche! whose mass,
Thrice sifted by the storm, had gathered there
Flake after flake, in heaven-defying minds
As thought by thought is piled, till some great truth
Is loosened, and the nations echo round,
Shaken to their roots, as do the mountains now.

PANTHEA
Look how the gusty sea of mist is breaking
In crimson foam, even at our feet! it rises

As Ocean at the enchantment of the moon
Round foodless men wrecked on some oozy isle.

ASIA
The fragments of the cloud are scattered up;
The wind that lifts them disentwines my hair;
Its billows now sweep o'er mine eyes; my brain
Grows dizzy; I see shapes within the mist.

PANTHEA
A countenance with beckoning smiles; there burns
An azure fire within its golden locks!
Another and another: hark! they speak!

SONG OF SPIRITS
To the deep, to the deep,
Down down!
Through the shade of sleep,
Through the cloudy strife
Of Death and of Life;
Through the veil and the bar
Of things which seem and are,
Even to the steps of the remotest throne,
Down, down!

While the sound whirls around,
Down, down!
As the fawn draws the hound,
As the lightning the vapor,
As a weak moth the taper;
Death, despair; love, sorrow;
Time, both; to-day, to-morrow;
As steel obeys the spirit of the stone,
Down, down!

Through the gray, void abysm,
Down, down!
Where the air is no prism,

And the moon and stars are not,
And the cavern-crags wear not
The radiance of Heaven,
Nor the gloom to Earth given,
Where there is one pervading, one alone,
Down, down!

In the depth of the deep
Down, down!
Like veiled lightning asleep,
Like the spark nursed in embers,
The last look Love remembers,
Like a diamond, which shines
On the dark wealth of mines,
A spell is treasured but for thee alone.
Down, down!

We have bound thee, we guide thee;
Down, down!
With the bright form beside thee;
Resist not the weakness,
Such strength is in meekness
That the Eternal, the Immortal,
Must unloose through life's portal
The snake-like Doom coiled underneath his throne
By that alone.

SCENE IV. — *The Cave of* DEMOGORGON. ASIA *and* PANTHEA.

PANTHEA
What veilèd form sits on that ebon throne?

ASIA
The veil has fallen.

PANTHEA
I see a mighty darkness
Filling the seat of power, and rays of gloom

Dart round, as light from the meridian sun,
Ungazed upon and shapeless; neither limb,
Nor form, nor outline; yet we feel it is
A living Spirit.

DEMOGORGON
Ask what thou wouldst know.

ASIA
What canst thou tell?

DEMOGORGON
All things thou dar'st demand.

ASIA
Who made the living world?

DEMOGORGON
God.

ASIA
Who made all
That it contains? thought, passion, reason, will,
Imagination?

DEMOGORGON
God: Almighty God.

ASIA
Who made that sense which, when the winds of spring
In rarest visitation, or the voice
Of one belovèd heard in youth alone,
Fills the faint eyes with falling tears which dim
The radiant looks of unbewailing flowers,
And leaves this peopled earth a solitude
When it returns no more?

DEMOGORGON
Merciful God.

ASIA
And who made terror, madness, crime, remorse,
Which from the links of the great chain of things
To every thought within the mind of man
Sway and drag heavily, and each one reels
Under the load towards the pit of death;
Abandoned hope, and love that turns to hate;
And self-contempt, bitterer to drink than blood;
Pain, whose unheeded and familiar speech
Is howling, and keen shrieks, day after day;
And Hell, or the sharp fear of Hell?

DEMOGORGON
He reigns.

ASIA
Utter his name; a world pining in pain
Asks but his name; curses shall drag him down.

DEMOGORGON
He reigns.

ASIA
I feel, I know it: who?

DEMOGORGON
He reigns.

ASIA
Who reigns? There was the Heaven and Earth at first,
And Light and Love; then Saturn, from whose throne
Time fell, an envious shadow; such the state
Of the earth's primal spirits beneath his sway,
As the calm joy of flowers and living leaves
Before the wind or sun has withered them

And semivital worms; but he refused
The birthright of their being, knowledge, power,
The skill which wields the elements, the thought
Which pierces this dim universe like light,
Self-empire, and the majesty of love;
For thirst of which they fainted. Then Prometheus
Gave wisdom, which is strength, to Jupiter,
And with this law alone, 'Let man be free,'
Clothed him with the dominion of wide Heaven.
To know nor faith, nor love, nor law, to be
Omnipotent but friendless, is to reign;
And Jove now reigned; for on the race of man
First famine, and then toil, and then disease,
Strife, wounds, and ghastly death unseen before,
Fell; and the unseasonable seasons drove,
With alternating shafts of frost and fire,
Their shelterless, pale tribes to mountain caves;
And in their desert hearts fierce wants he sent,
And mad disquietudes, and shadows idle
Of unreal good, which levied mutual war,
So ruining the lair wherein they raged.
Prometheus saw, and waked the legioned hopes
Which sleep within folded Elysian flowers,
Nepenthe, Moly, Amaranth, fadeless blooms,
That they might hide with thin and rainbow wings
The shape of Death; and Love he sent to bind
The disunited tendrils of that vine
Which bears the wine of life, the human heart;
And he tamed fire which, like some beast of prey,
Most terrible, but lovely, played beneath
The frown of man; and tortured to his will
Iron and gold, the slaves and signs of power,
And gems and poisons, and all subtlest forms
Hidden beneath the mountains and the waves.
He gave man speech, and speech created thought,
Which is the measure of the universe;
And Science struck the thrones of earth and heaven,

Which shook, but fell not; and the harmonious mind
Poured itself forth in all-prophetic song;
And music lifted up the listening spirit
Until it walked, exempt from mortal care,
Godlike, o'er the clear billows of sweet sound;
And human hands first mimicked and then mocked,
With moulded limbs more lovely than its own,
The human form, till marble grew divine;
And mothers, gazing, drank the love men see
Reflected in their race, behold, and perish.
He told the hidden power of herbs and springs,
And Disease drank and slept. Death grew like sleep.
He taught the implicated orbits woven
Of the wide-wandering stars; and how the sun
Changes his lair, and by what secret spell
The pale moon is transformed, when her broad eye
Gazes not on the interlunar sea.
He taught to rule, as life directs the limbs,
The tempest-wingèd chariots of the Ocean,
And the Celt knew the Indian. Cities then
Were built, and through their snow-like columns flowed
The warm winds, and the azure ether shone,
And the blue sea and shadowy hills were seen.
Such, the alleviations of his state,
Prometheus gave to man, for which he hangs
Withering in destined pain; but who rains down
Evil, the immedicable plague, which, while
Man looks on his creation like a god
And sees that it is glorious, drives him on,
The wreck of his own will, the scorn of earth,
The outcast, the abandoned, the alone?
Not Jove: while yet his frown shook heaven ay, when
His adversary from adamantine chains
Cursed him, he trembled like a slave. Declare
Who is his master? Is he too a slave?

DEMOGORGON
All spirits are enslaved which serve things evil:
Thou knowest if Jupiter be such or no.

ASIA
Whom called'st thou God?

DEMOGORGON
I spoke but as ye speak,
For Jove is the supreme of living things.

ASIA
Who is the master of the slave?

DEMOGORGON
If the abysm
Could vomit forth its secrets — but a voice
Is wanting, the deep truth is imageless;
For what would it avail to bid thee gaze
On the revolving world? What to bid speak
Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance and Change? To these
All things are subject but eternal Love.

ASIA
So much I asked before, and my heart gave
The response thou hast given; and of such truths
Each to itself must be the oracle.
One more demand; and do thou answer me
As my own soul would answer, did it know
That which I ask. Prometheus shall arise
Henceforth the sun of this rejoicing world:
When shall the destined hour arrive?

DEMOGORGON
Behold!

ASIA
The rocks are cloven, and through the purple night

I see cars drawn by rainbow-wingèd steeds
Which trample the dim winds; in each there stands
A wild-eyed charioteer urging their flight.
Some look behind, as fiends pursued them there,
And yet I see no shapes but the keen stars;
Others, with burning eyes, lean forth, and drink
With eager lips the wind of their own speed,
As if the thing they loved fled on before,
And now, even now, they clasped it. Their bright locks
Stream like a comet's flashing hair; they all
Sweep onward.

DEMOGORGON
These are the immortal Hours,
Of whom thou didst demand. One waits for thee.

ASIA
A Spirit with a dreadful countenance
Checks its dark chariot by the craggy gulf.
Unlike thy brethren, ghastly Charioteer,
Who art thou? Whither wouldst thou bear me? Speak!

SPIRIT
I am the Shadow of a destiny
More dread than is my aspect; ere yon planet
Has set, the darkness which ascends with me
Shall wrap in lasting night heaven's kingless throne.

ASIA
What meanest thou?

PANTHEA
That terrible Shadow floats
Up from its throne, as may the lurid smoke
Of earthquake-ruined cities o'er the sea.
Lo! it ascends the car; the coursers fly
Terrified; watch its path among the stars
Blackening the night!

ASIA
Thus I am answered: strange!

PANTHEA
See, near the verge, another chariot stays;
An ivory shell inlaid with crimson fire,
Which comes and goes within its sculptured rim
Of delicate strange tracery; the young Spirit
That guides it has the dove-like eyes of hope;
How it soft smiles attract the soul! as light
Lures wingèd insects through the lampless air.

SPIRIT
My coursers are fed with the lightning,
They drink of the whirlwind's stream,
And when the red morning is bright'ning
They bathe in the fresh sunbeam.
They have strength for their swiftness I deem;
Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.

I desire — and their speed makes night kindle;
I fear — they outstrip the typhoon;
Ere the cloud piled on Atlas can dwindle
We encircle the earth and the moon.
We shall rest from long labors at noon;
Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.

SCENE V. — *The Car pauses within a Cloud on the Top of a snowy Mountain.* ASIA, PANTHEA, *and the* SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.

SPIRIT
On the brink of the night and the morning
My coursers are wont to respire;
But the Earth has just whispered a warning
That their flight must be swifter than fire;
They shall drink the hot speed of desire!

ASIA
Thou breathest on their nostrils, but my breath
Would give them swifter speed.

SPIRIT
Alas! it could not

PANTHEA
O Spirit! pause, and tell whence is the light
Which fills the cloud? the sun is yet unrisen.

SPIRIT
The sun will rise not until noon. Apollo
Is held in heaven by wonder; and the light
Which fills this vapor, as the aërial hue
Of fountain-gazing roses fills the water,
Flows from thy mighty sister.

PANTHEA
Yes, I feel —

ASIA
What is it with thee, sister? Thou art pale.

PANTHEA
How thou art changed! I dare not look on thee;
I feel but see thee not. I scarce endure
The radiance of thy beauty. Some good change
Is working in the elements, which suffer
Thy presence thus unveiled. The Nereids tell
That on the day when the clear hyaline
Was cloven at thy uprise, and thou didst stand
Within a veinèd shell, which floated on
Over the calm floor of the crystal sea,
Among the Ægean isles, and by the shores
Which bear thy name, — love, like the atmosphere
Of the sun's fire filling the living world,
Burst from thee, and illumined earth and heaven

And the deep ocean and the sunless caves
And all that dwells within them; till grief cast
Eclipse upon the soul from which it came.
Such art thou now; nor is it I alone,
Thy sister, thy companion, thine own chosen one,
But the whole world which seeks thy sympathy.
Hearest thou not sounds i' the air which speak the love
Of all articulate beings? Feelest thou not
The inanimate winds enamoured of thee? List! [*Music.*

ASIA
Thy words are sweeter than aught else but his
Whose echoes they are; yet all love is sweet,
Given or returned. Common as light is love,
And its familiar voice wearies not ever.
Like the wide heaven, the all-sustaining air,
It makes the reptile equal to the God;
They who inspire it most are fortunate,
As I am now; but those who feel it most
Are happier still, after long sufferings,
As I shall soon become.

PANTHEA
List! Spirits speak.

VOICE *in the air, singing*
Life of Life, thy lips enkindle
With their love the breath between them;
And thy smiles before they dwindle
Make the cold air fire; then screen them
In those looks, where whoso gazes
Faints, entangled in their mazes.

Child of Light! thy limbs are burning
Through the vest which seems to hide them;
As the radiant lines of morning
Through the clouds, ere they divide them;

And this atmosphere divinest
Shrouds thee wheresoe'er thou shinest.

Fair are others; none beholds thee,
But thy voice sounds low and tender
Like the fairest, for it folds thee
From the sight, that liquid splendor,
And all feel, yet see thee never,
As I feel now, lost forever!

Lamp of Earth! where'er thou movest
Its dim shapes are clad with brightness,
And the souls of whom thou lovest
Walk upon the winds with lightness,
Till they fail, as I am failing,
Dizzy, lost, yet unbewailing!

ASIA
My soul is an enchanted boat,
Which, like a sleeping swan, doth float
Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing;
And thine doth like an angel sit
Beside a helm conducting it,
Whilst all the winds with melody are ringing.
It seems to float ever, forever,
Upon that many-winding river,
Between mountains, woods, abysses,
A paradise of wildernesses!
Till, like one in slumber bound,
Borne to the ocean, I float down, around,
Into a sea profound of ever-spreading sound.

Meanwhile thy spirit lifts its pinions
In music's most serene dominions;
Catching the winds that fan that happy heaven.
And we sail on, away, afar,
Without a course, without a star,
But, by the instinct of sweet music driven;

Till through Elysian garden islets
By thee most beautiful of pilots,
Where never mortal pinnace glided,
The boat of my desire is guided;
Realms where the air we breathe is love,
Which in the winds on the waves doth move,
Harmonizing this earth with what we feel above.

We have passed Age's icy caves,
And Manhood's dark and tossing waves,
And Youth's smooth ocean, smiling to betray;
Beyond the glassy gulfs we flee
Of shadow-peopled Infancy,
Through Death and Birth, to a diviner day;
A paradise of vaulted bowers
Lit by downward-gazing flowers,
And watery paths that wind between
Wildernesses calm and green,
Peopled by shapes too bright to see,
And rest, having beheld; somewhat like thee;
Which walk upon the sea, and chant melodiously!

Act III

SCENE I. — *Heaven.* JUPITER *on his Throne;* THETIS *and the other Deities assembled.*

JUPITER
YE congregated powers of heaven, who share
The glory and the strength of him ye serve,
Rejoice! henceforth I am omnipotent.
All else had been subdued to me; alone
The soul of man, like unextinguished fire,
Yet burns towards heaven with fierce reproach, and doubt,
And lamentation, and reluctant prayer,
Hurling up insurrection, which might make
Our antique empire insecure, though built
On eldest faith, and hell's coeval, fear;
And though my curses through the pendulous air,
Like snow on herbless peaks, fall flake by flake,
And cling to it; though under my wrath's night
It climb the crags of life, step after step,
Which wound it, as ice wounds unsandalled feet,
It yet remains supreme o'er misery,
Aspiring, unrepressed, yet soon to fall;
Even now have I begotten a strange wonder,
That fatal child, the terror of the earth,
Who waits but till the destined hour arrive,
Bearing from Demogorgon's vacant throne
The dreadful might of ever-living limbs
Which clothed that awful spirit unbeheld,
To redescend, and trample out the spark.
Pour forth heaven's wine, Idæan Ganymede,
And let it fill the dædal cups like fire,
And from the flower-inwoven soil divine,
Ye all-triumphant harmonies, arise,
As dew from earth under the twilight stars.
Drink! be the nectar circling through your veins

The soul of joy, ye ever-living Gods,
Till exultation burst in one wide voice
Like music from Elysian winds.
And thou
Ascend beside me, veilèd in the light
Of the desire which makes thee one with me,
Thetis, bright image of eternity!
When thou didst cry, 'Insufferable might!
God! spare me! I sustain not the quick flames,
The penetrating presence; all my being,
Like him whom the Numidian seps did thaw
Into a dew with poison, is dissolved,
Sinking through its foundations,' — even then
Two mighty spirits, mingling, made a third
Mightier than either, which, unbodied now,
Between us floats, felt, although unbeheld,
Waiting the incarnation, which ascends,
(Hear ye the thunder of the fiery wheels
Griding the winds?) from Demogorgon's throne.
Victory! victory! Feel'st thou not, O world,
The earthquake of his chariot thundering up
Olympus?

[*The Car of the* HOUR *arrives.* DEMOGORGON *descends and moves towards the Throne of* JUPITER.

Awful shape, what art thou? Speak!

DEMOGORGON
Eternity. Demand no direr name.
Descend, and follow me down the abyss.
I am thy child, as thou wert Saturn's child;
Mightier than thee; and we must dwell together
Henceforth in darkness. Lift thy lightnings not.
The tyranny of heaven none may retain,
Or reassume, or hold, succeeding thee;
Yet if thou wilt, as 't is the destiny

Of trodden worms to writhe till they are dead,
Put forth thy might.

JUPITER
Detested prodigy!
Even thus beneath the deep Titanian prisons
I trample thee! Thou lingerest?
Mercy! mercy!
No pity, no release, no respite! Oh,
That thou wouldst make mine enemy my judge,
Even where he hangs, seared by my long revenge,
On Caucasus! he would not doom me thus.
Gentle, and just, and dreadless, is he not
The monarch of the world? What then art thou?
No refuge! no appeal!
Sink with me then,
We two will sink on the wide waves of ruin,
Even as a vulture and a snake outspent
Drop, twisted in inextricable fight,
Into a shoreless sea! Let hell unlock
Its mounded oceans of tempestuous fire,
And whelm on them into the bottomless void
This desolated world, and thee, and me,
The conqueror and the conquered, and the wreck
Of that for which they combated!
Ai, Ai!
The elements obey me not. I sink
Dizzily down, ever, forever, down.
And, like a cloud, mine enemy above
Darkens my fall with victory! Ai, Ai!

SCENE II. — *The Mouth of a great River in the Island Atlantis.* OCEAN *is discovered reclining near the shore;* APOLLO *stands beside him.*

OCEAN
He fell, thou sayest, beneath his conqueror's frown?

APOLLO
Ay, when the strife was ended which made dim
The orb I rule, and shook the solid stars,
The terrors of his eye illumined heaven
With sanguine light, through the thick ragged skirts
Of the victorious darkness, as he fell;
Like the last glare of day's red agony,
Which, from a rent among the fiery clouds,
Burns far along the tempest-wrinkled deep.

OCEAN
He sunk to the abyss? to the dark void?

APOLLO
An eagle so caught in some bursting cloud
On Caucasus, his thunder-baffled wings
Entangled in the whirlwind, and his eyes,
Which gazed on the undazzling sun, now blinded
By the white lightning, while the ponderous hail
Beats on his struggling form, which sinks at length
Prone, and the aërial ice clings over it.

OCEAN
Henceforth the fields of Heaven-reflecting sea
Which are my realm, will heave, unstained with blood,
Beneath the uplifting winds, like plains of corn
Swayed by the summer air; my streams will flow
Round many-peopled continents, and round
Fortunate isles; and from their glassy thrones
Blue Proteus and his humid nymphs shall mark
The shadow of fair ships, as mortals see
The floating bark of the light-laden moon
With that white star, its sightless pilot's crest,
Borne down the rapid sunset's ebbing sea;
Tracking their path no more by blood and groans,
And desolation, and the mingled voice
Of slavery and command; but by the light

Of wave-reflected flowers, and floating odors,
And music soft, and mild, free, gentle voices,
That sweetest music, such as spirits love.

APOLLO
And I shall gaze not on the deeds which make
My mind obscure with sorrow, as eclipse
Darkens the sphere I guide. But list, I hear
The small, clear, silver lute of the young Spirit
That sits i' the morning star.

OCEAN
Thou must away;
Thy steeds will pause at even, till when farewell.
The loud deep calls me home even now to feed it
With azure calm out of the emerald urns
Which stand forever full beside my throne.
Behold the Nereids under the green sea,
Their wavering limbs borne on the windlike stream,
Their white arms lifted o'er their streaming hair,
With garlands pied and starry sea-flower crowns,
Hastening to grace their mighty sister's joy.
[*A sound of waves is heard.*
It is the unpastured sea hungering for calm.
Peace, monster; I come now. Farewell.

APOLLO
Farewell.

SCENE III. — *Caucasus.* PROMETHEUS, HERCULES, IONE, *the* EARTH, SPIRITS, ASIA, *and* PANTHEA, *borne in the Car with the* SPIRIT OF THE HOUR. HERCULES *unbinds* PROMETHEUS, *who descends.*

HERCULES
Most glorious among spirits! thus doth strength
To wisdom, courage, and long-suffering love,

And thee, who art the form they animate,
Minister like a slave.

PROMETHEUS
Thy gentle words
Are sweeter even than freedom long desired
And long delayed.

Asia, thou light of life,
Shadow of beauty unbeheld; and ye,
Fair sister nymphs, who made long years of pain
Sweet to remember, through your love and care;
Henceforth we will not part. There is a cave,
All overgrown with trailing odorous plants,
Which curtain out the day with leaves and flowers,
And paved with veinèd emerald; and a fountain
Leaps in the midst with an awakening sound.
From its curved roof the mountain's frozen tears,
Like snow, or silver, or long diamond spires,
Hang downward, raining forth a doubtful light;
And there is heard the ever-moving air
Whispering without from tree to tree, and birds,
And bees; and all around are mossy seats,
And the rough walls are clothed with long soft grass;
A simple dwelling, which shall be our own;
Where we will sit and talk of time and change,
As the world ebbs and flows, ourselves unchanged.
What can hide man from mutability?
And if ye sigh, then I will smile; and thou,
Ione, shalt chant fragments of sea-music,
Until I weep, when ye shall smile away
The tears she brought, which yet were sweet to shed.
We will entangle buds and flowers and beams
Which twinkle on the fountain's brim, and make
Strange combinations out of common things,
Like human babes in their brief innocence;
And we will search, with looks and words of love,

For hidden thoughts, each lovelier than the last,
Our unexhausted spirits; and, like lutes
Touched by the skill of the enamoured wind,
Weave harmonies divine, yet ever new,
From difference sweet where discord cannot be;
And hither come, sped on the charmèd winds,
Which meet from all the points of heaven — as bees
From every flower aërial Enna feeds
At their known island-homes in Himera —
The echoes of the human world, which tell
Of the low voice of love, almost unheard,
And dove-eyed pity's murmured pain, and music,
Itself the echo of the heart, and all
That tempers or improves man's life, now free;
And lovely apparitions, — dim at first,
Then radiant, as the mind arising bright
From the embrace of beauty (whence the forms
Of which these are the phantoms) casts on them
The gathered rays which are reality —
Shall visit us the progeny immortal
Of Painting, Sculpture, and rapt Poesy,
And arts, though unimagined, yet to be;
The wandering voices and the shadows these
Of all that man becomes, the mediators
Of that best worship, love, by him and us
Given and returned; swift shapes and sounds, which grow
More fair and soft as man grows wise and kind,
And, veil by veil, evil and error fall.
Such virtue has the cave and place around.
[*Turning to the* SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.
For thee, fair Spirit, one toil remains. Ione,
Give her that curvèd shell, which Proteus old
Made Asia's nuptial boon, breathing within it
A voice to be accomplished, and which thou
Didst hide in grass under the hollow rock.

IONE
Thou most desired Hour, more loved and lovely
Than all thy sisters, this is the mystic shell.
See the pale azure fading into silver
Lining it with a soft yet glowing light.
Looks it not like lulled music sleeping there?

SPIRIT
It seems in truth the fairest shell of Ocean:
Its sound must be at once both sweet and strange.

PROMETHEUS
Go, borne over the cities of mankind
On whirlwind-footed coursers; once again
Outspeed the sun around the orbèd world;
And as thy chariot cleaves the kindling air,
Thou breathe into the many-folded shell,
Loosening its mighty music; it shall be
As thunder mingled with clear echoes; then
Return; and thou shalt dwell beside our cave.

And thou, O Mother Earth! —

THE EARTH
I hear, I feel;
Thy lips are on me, and thy touch runs down
Even to the adamantine central gloom
Along these marble nerves; ‘t is life, ‘t is joy,
And, through my withered, old, and icy frame
The warmth of an immortal youth shoots down
Circling. Henceforth the many children fair
Folded in my sustaining arms; all plants,
And creeping forms, and insects rainbow-winged,
And birds, and beasts, and fish, and human shapes,
Which drew disease and pain from my wan bosom,
Draining the poison of despair, shall take
And interchange sweet nutriment; to me
Shall they become like sister-antelopes

By one fair dam, snow-white, and swift as wind,
Nursed among lilies near a brimming stream.
The dew-mists of my sunless sleep shall float
Under the stars like balm; night-folded flowers
Shall suck unwithering hues in their repose;
And men and beasts in happy dreams shall gather
Strength for the coming day, and all its joy;
And death shall be the last embrace of her
Who takes the life she gave, even as a mother,
Folding her child, says, 'Leave me not again.'

ASIA
Oh, mother! wherefore speak the name of death?
Cease they to love, and move, and breathe, and speak,
Who die?

THE EARTH
It would avail not to reply;
Thou art immortal and this tongue is known
But to the uncommunicating dead.
Death is the veil which those who live call life;
They sleep, and it is lifted; and meanwhile
In mild variety the seasons mild
With rainbow-skirted showers, and odorous winds,
And long blue meteors cleansing the dull night,
And the life-kindling shafts of the keen sun's
All-piercing bow, and the dew-mingled rain
Of the calm moonbeams, a soft influence mild,
Shall clothe the forests and the fields, ay, even
The crag-built deserts of the barren deep,
With ever-living leaves, and fruits, and flowers.
And thou! there is a cavern where my spirit
Was panted forth in anguish whilst thy pain
Made my heart mad, and those who did inhale it
Became mad too, and built a temple there,
And spoke, and were oracular, and lured
The erring nations round to mutual war,

And faithless faith, such as Jove kept with thee;
Which breath now rises as amongst tall weeds
A violet's exhalation, and it fills
With a serener light and crimson air
Intense, yet soft, the rocks and woods around;
It feeds the quick growth of the serpent vine,
And the dark linkèd ivy tangling wild,
And budding, blown, or odor-faded blooms
Which star the winds with points of colored light
As they rain through them, and bright golden globes
Of fruit suspended in their own green heaven,
And through their veinèd leaves and amber stems
The flowers whose purple and translucid bowls
Stand ever mantling with aërial dew,
The drink of spirits; and it circles round,
Like the soft waving wings of noonday dreams,
Inspiring calm and happy thoughts, like mine,
Now thou art thus restored. This cave is thine.
Arise! Appear!
[A SPIRIT *rises in the likeness of a winged child.*
This is my torch-bearer;
Who let his lamp out in old time with gazing
On eyes from which he kindled it anew
With love, which is as fire, sweet daughter mine,
For such is that within thine own. Run, wayward,
And guide this company beyond the peak
Of Bacchic Nysa, Mænad-haunted mountain,
And beyond Indus and its tribute rivers,
Trampling the torrent streams and glassy lakes
With feet unwet, unwearied, undelaying,
And up the green ravine, across the vale,
Beside the windless and crystalline pool,
Where ever lies, on unerasing waves,
The image of a temple, built above,
Distinct with column, arch, and architrave,
And palm-like capital, and overwrought,
And populous most with living imagery,

Praxitelean shapes, whose marble smiles
Fill the hushed air with everlasting love.
It is deserted now, but once it bore
Thy name, Prometheus; there the emulous youths
Bore to thy honor through the divine gloom
The lamp which was thine emblem; even as those
Who bear the untransmitted torch of hope
Into the grave, across the night of life,
As thou hast borne it most triumphantly
To this far goal of Time. Depart, farewell!
Beside that temple is the destined cave.

SCENE IV. — *A Forest. In the background a Cave.* PROMETHEUS, ASIA, PANTHEA, IONE, *and the* SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.

IONE
Sister, it is not earthly; how it glides
Under the leaves! how on its head there burns
A light, like a green star, whose emerald beams
Are twined with its fair hair! how, as it moves,
The splendor drops in flakes upon the grass!
Knowest thou it?

PANTHEA
It is the delicate spirit
That guides the earth through heaven. From afar
The populous constellations call that light
The loveliest of the planets; and sometimes
It floats along the spray of the salt sea,
Or makes its chariot of a foggy cloud,
Or walks through fields or cities while men sleep,
Or o’er the mountain tops, or down the rivers,
Or through the green waste wilderness, as now,
Wondering at all it sees. Before Jove reigned
It loved our sister Asia, and it came
Each leisure hour to drink the liquid light
Out of her eyes, for which it said it thirsted

As one bit by a dipsas, and with her
It made its childish confidence, and told her
All it had known or seen, for it saw much,
Yet idly reasoned what it saw; and called her,
For whence it sprung it knew not, nor do I,
Mother, dear mother.

THE SPIRIT OF THE EARTH, *running to* ASIA
Mother, dearest mother!
May I then talk with thee as I was wont?
May I then hide my eyes in thy soft arms,
After thy looks have made them tired of joy?
May I then play beside thee the long noons,
When work is none in the bright silent air?

ASIA
I love thee, gentlest being, and henceforth
Can cherish thee unenvied. Speak, I pray;
Thy simple talk once solaced, now delights.

SPIRIT OF THE EARTH
Mother, I am grown wiser, though a child
Cannot be wise like thee, within this day;
And happier too; happier and wiser both.
Thou knowest that toads, and snakes, and loathly worms,
And venomous and malicious beasts, and boughs
That bore ill berries in the woods, were ever
An hindrance to my walks o'er the green world;
And that, among the haunts of humankind,
Hard-featured men, or with proud, angry looks,
Or cold, staid gait, or false and hollow smiles,
Or the dull sneer of self-loved ignorance,
Or other such foul masks, with which ill thoughts
Hide that fair being whom we spirits call man;
And women too, ugliest of all things evil,
(Though fair, even in a world where thou art fair,
When good and kind, free and sincere like thee)

When false or frowning made me sick at heart
To pass them, though they slept, and I unseen.
Well, my path lately lay through a great city
Into the woody hills surrounding it;
A sentinel was sleeping at the gate;
When there was heard a sound, so loud, it shook
The towers amid the moonlight, yet more sweet
Than any voice but thine, sweetest of all;
A long, long sound, as it would never end;
And all the inhabitants leapt suddenly
Out of their rest, and gathered in the streets,
Looking in wonder up to Heaven, while yet
The music pealed along. I hid myself
Within a fountain in the public square,
Where I lay like the reflex of the moon
Seen in a wave under green leaves; and soon
Those ugly human shapes and visages
Of which I spoke as having wrought me pain,
Passed floating through the air and fading still
Into the winds that scattered them; and those
From whom they passed seemed mild and lovely forms
After some foul disguise had fallen, and all
Were somewhat changed, and after brief surprise
And greetings of delighted wonder, all
Went to their sleep again; and when the dawn
Came, wouldst thou think that toads, and snakes, and efts,
Could e'er be beautiful? yet so they were,
And that with little change of shape or hue;
All things had put their evil nature off;
I cannot tell my joy, when o'er a lake,
Upon a drooping bough with nightshade twined,
I saw two azure halcyons clinging downward
And thinning one bright bunch of amber berries,
With quick long beaks, and in the deep there lay
Those lovely forms imaged as in a sky;
So with my thoughts full of these happy changes,
We meet again, the happiest change of all.

ASIA
And never will we part, till thy chaste sister,
Who guides the frozen and inconstant moon,
Will look on thy more warm and equal light
Till her heart thaw like flakes of April snow,
And love thee.

SPIRIT OF THE EARTH
What! as Asia loves Prometheus?

ASIA
Peace, wanton! thou art yet not old enough.
Think ye by gazing on each other's eyes
To multiply your lovely selves, and fill
With spherèd fires the interlunar air?

SPIRIT OF THE EARTH
Nay, mother, while my sister trims her lamp
'T is hard I should go darkling.

ASIA
Listen; look!

The SPIRIT OF THE HOUR *enters*

PROMETHEUS
We feel what thou hast heard and seen; yet speak.

SPIRIT OF THE HOUR
Soon as the sound had ceased whose thunder filled
The abysses of the sky and the wide earth,
There was a change; the impalpable thin air
And the all-circling sunlight were transformed,
As if the sense of love, dissolved in them,
Had folded itself round the spherèd world.
My vision then grew clear, and I could see
Into the mysteries of the universe.
Dizzy as with delight I floated down;

Winnowing the lightsome air with languid plumes,
My coursers sought their birthplace in the sun,
Where they henceforth will live exempt from toil,
Pasturing flowers of vegetable fire,
And where my moonlike car will stand within
A temple, gazed upon by Phidian forms
Of thee, and Asia, and the Earth, and me,
And you, fair nymphs, looking the love we feel, —
In memory of the tidings it has borne, —
Beneath a dome fretted with graven flowers,
Poised on twelve columns of resplendent stone,
And open to the bright and liquid sky.
Yoked to it by an amphisbenic snake
The likeness of those wingèd steeds will mock
The flight from which they find repose. Alas,
Whither has wandered now my partial tongue
When all remains untold which ye would hear?
As I have said, I floated to the earth;
It was, as it is still, the pain of bliss
To move, to breathe, to be. I wandering went
Among the haunts and dwellings of mankind,
And first was disappointed not to see
Such mighty change as I had felt within
Expressed in outward things; but soon I looked,
And behold, thrones were kingless, and men walked
One with the other even as spirits do —
None fawned, none trampled; hate, disdain, or fear,
Self-love or self-contempt, on human brows
No more inscribed, as o'er the gate of hell,
'All hope abandon, ye who enter here.'
None frowned, none trembled, none with eager fear
Gazed on another's eye of cold command,
Until the subject of a tyrant's will
Became, worse fate, the abject of his own,
Which spurred him, like an outspent horse, to death.
None wrought his lips in truth-entangling lines
Which smiled the lie his tongue disdained to speak.

None, with firm sneer, trod out in his own heart
The sparks of love and hope till there remained
Those bitter ashes, a soul self-consumed,
And the wretch crept a vampire among men,
Infecting all with his own hideous ill.
None talked that common, false, cold, hollow talk
Which makes the heart deny the *yes* it breathes,
Yet question that unmeant hypocrisy
With such a self-mistrust as has no name.
And women, too, frank, beautiful, and kind,
As the free heaven which rains fresh light and dew
On the wide earth, passed; gentle, radiant forms,
From custom's evil taint exempt and pure;
Speaking the wisdom once they could not think,
Looking emotions once they feared to feel,
And changed to all which once they dared not be,
Yet being now, made earth like heaven; nor pride,
Nor jealousy, nor envy, nor ill shame,
The bitterest of those drops of treasured gall,
Spoiled the sweet taste of the nepenthe, love.

Thrones, altars, judgment-seats, and prisons, wherein,
And beside which, by wretched men were borne
Sceptres, tiaras, swords, and chains, and tomes
Of reasoned wrong, glozed on by ignorance,
Were like those monstrous and barbaric shapes,
The ghosts of a no-more-remembered fame
Which from their unworn obelisks, look forth
In triumph o'er the palaces and tombs
Of those who were their conquerors; mouldering round,
Those imaged to the pride of kings and priests
A dark yet mighty faith, a power as wide
As is the world it wasted, and are now
But an astonishment; even so the tools
And emblems of its last captivity,
Amid the dwellings of the peopled earth,
Stand, not o'erthrown, but unregarded now.

And those foul shapes, — abhorred by god and man,
Which, under many a name and many a form
Strange, savage, ghastly, dark, and execrable,
Were Jupiter, the tyrant of the world,
And which the nations, panic-stricken, served
With blood, and hearts broken by long hope, and love
Dragged to his altars soiled and garlandless,
And slain among men's unreclaiming tears,
Flattering the thing they feared, which fear was hate, —
Frown, mouldering fast, o'er their abandoned shrines.
The painted veil, by those who were, called life,
Which mimicked, as with colors idly spread,
All men believed and hoped, is torn aside;
The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself; just, gentle, wise; but man
Passionless — no, yet free from guilt or pain,
Which were, for his will made or suffered them;
Nor yet exempt, though ruling them like slaves,
From chance, and death, and mutability,
The clogs of that which else might oversoar
The loftiest star of unascended heaven,
Pinnacled dim in the intense inane.

Act IV

SCENE — *A part of the Forest near the Cave of* PROMETHEUS. PANTHEA *and* IONE *are sleeping: they awaken gradually during the first Song.*

VOICE OF UNSEEN SPIRITS
THE pale stars are gone!
For the sun, their swift shepherd
To their folds them compelling,
In the depths of the dawn,
Hastes, in meteor-eclipsing array, and the flee
Beyond his blue dwelling,
As fawns flee the leopard,
But where are ye?

A Train of dark Forms and Shadows passes by confusedly, singing.

Here, oh, here!
We bear the bier
Of the father of many a cancelled year!
Spectres we
Of the dead Hours be;
We bear Time to his tomb in eternity.

Strew, oh, strew
Hair, not yew!
Wet the dusty pall with tears, not dew!
Be the faded flowers
Of Death's bare bowers
Spread on the corpse of the King of Hours!

Haste, oh, haste!
As shades are chased,
Trembling, by day, from heaven's blue waste,
We melt away,
Like dissolving spray,

From the children of a diviner day,
With the lullaby
Of winds that die
On the bosom of their own harmony!

IONE
What dark forms were they?

PANTHEA
The past Hours weak and gray,
With the spoil which their toil
Raked together
From the conquest but One could foil.

IONE
Have they passed?

PANTHEA
They have passed;
They outspeeded the blast,
While ‘t is said, they are fled!

IONE
Whither, oh, whither?

PANTHEA
To the dark, to the past, to the dead.

VOICE OF UNSEEN SPIRITS
Bright clouds float in heaven,
Dew-stars gleam on earth,
Waves assemble on ocean,
They are gathered and driven
By the storm of delight, by the panic of glee!
They shake with emotion,
They dance in their mirth.
But where are ye?

The pine boughs are singing
Old songs with new gladness,
The billows and fountains
Fresh music are flinging,
Like the notes of a spirit from land and from sea;
The storms mock the mountains
With the thunder of gladness,
But where are ye?

IONE
What charioteers are these?

PANTHEA
Where are their chariots?

SEMICHORUS OF HOURS
The voice of the Spirits of Air and of Earth
Has drawn back the figured curtain of sleep,
Which covered our being and darkened our birth
In the deep.

A VOICE
In the deep?

SEMICHORUS II
Oh! below the deep.

SEMICHORUS I
An hundred ages we had been kept
Cradled in visions of hate and care,
And each one who waked as his brother slept
Found the truth —

SEMICHORUS II
Worse than his visions were!

SEMICHORUS I
We have heard the lute of Hope in sleep;

We have known the voice of Love in dreams;
We have felt the wand of Power, and leap —

SEMICHORUS II
As the billows leap in the morning beams!

CHORUS
Weave the dance on the floor of the breeze,
Pierce with song heaven's silent light,
Enchant the day that too swiftly flees,
To check its flight ere the cave of night.

Once the hungry Hours were hounds
Which chased the day like a bleeding deer,
And it limped and stumbled with many wounds
Through the nightly dells of the desert year.

But now, oh, weave the mystic measure
Of music, and dance, and shapes of light,
Let the Hours, and the Spirits of might and pleasure,
Like the clouds and sunbeams, unite —

A VOICE
Unite!

PANTHEA
See, where the Spirits of the human mind,
Wrapped in sweet sounds, as in bright veils, approach.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS
We join the throng
Of the dance and the song,
By the whirlwind of gladness borne along;
As the flying-fish leap
From the Indian deep
And mix with the sea-birds half-asleep.

CHORUS OF HOURS
Whence come ye, so wild and so fleet,
For sandals of lightning are on your feet,
And your wings are soft and swift as thought,
And your eyes are as love which is veilèd not?

CHORUS OF SPIRITS
We come from the mind
Of humankind,
Which was late so dusk, and obscene, and blind;
Now ‘t is an ocean
Of clear emotion,
A heaven of serene and mighty motion.

From that deep abyss
Of wonder and bliss,
Whose caverns are crystal palaces;
From those skyey towers
Where Thought’s crowned powers
Sit watching your dance, ye happy Hours!

From the dim recesses
Of woven caresses,
Where lovers catch ye by your loose tresses;
From the azure isles,
Where sweet Wisdom smiles,
Delaying your ships with her siren wiles.

From the temples high
Of Man’s ear and eye,
Roofed over Sculpture and Poesy;
From the murmurings
Of the unsealed springs,
Where Science bedews his dædal wings.

Years after years,
Through blood, and tears,
And a thick hell of hatreds, and hopes, and fears,

We waded and flew,
And the islets were few
Where the bud-blighted flowers of happiness grew.

Our feet now, every palm,
Are sandalled with calm,
And the dew of our wings is a rain of balm;
And, beyond our eyes,
The human love lies,
Which makes all it gazes on Paradise.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS AND HOURS
Then weave the web of the mystic measure;
From the depths of the sky and the ends of the earth,
Come, swift Spirits of might and of pleasure,
Fill the dance and the music of mirth,
As the waves of a thousand streams rush by
To an ocean of splendor and harmony!

CHORUS OF SPIRITS
Our spoil is won,
Our task is done,
We are free to dive, or soar, or run;
Beyond and around,
Or within the bound
Which clips the world with darkness round.

We ‘ll pass the eyes
Of the starry skies
Into the hoar deep to colonize;
Death, Chaos and Night,
From the sound of our flight,
Shall flee, like mist from a tempest’s might.

And Earth, Air and Light,
And the Spirit of Might,
Which drives round the stars in their fiery flight;
And Love, Thought and Breath,

The powers that quell Death,
Wherever we soar shall assemble beneath.

And our singing shall build
In the void's loose field
A world for the Spirit of Wisdom to wield;
We will take our plan
From the new world of man,
And our work shall be called the Promethean.

CHORUS OF HOURS
Break the dance, and scatter the song;
Let some depart, and some remain;

SEMICHORUS I
We, beyond heaven, are driven along;

SEMICHORUS II
Us the enchantments of earth retain;

SEMICHORUS I
Ceaseless, and rapid, and fierce, and free,
With the Spirits which build a new earth and sea,
And a heaven where yet heaven could never be;

SEMICHORUS II
Solemn, and slow, and serene, and bright,
Leading the Day, and outspeeding the Night,
With the powers of a world of perfect light;

SEMICHORUS I
We whirl, singing loud, round the gathering sphere,
Till the trees, and the beasts, and the clouds appear
From its chaos made calm by love, not fear;

SEMICHORUS II
We encircle the ocean and mountains of earth,

And the happy forms of its death and birth
Change to the music of our sweet mirth.

CHORUS OF HOURS AND SPIRITS
Break the dance, and scatter the song;
Let some depart, and some remain;
Wherever we fly we lead along
In leashes, like star-beams, soft yet strong,
The clouds that are heavy with love's sweet rain.

PANTHEA
Ha! they are gone!

IONE
Yet feel you no delight
From the past sweetness?

PANTHEA
As the bare green hill,
When some soft cloud vanishes into rain,
Laughs with a thousand drops of sunny water
To the unpavilioned sky!

IONE
Even whilst we speak
New notes arise. What is that awful sound?

PANTHEA
'T is the deep music of the rolling world,
Kindling within the strings of the waved air
Æolian modulations.

IONE
Listen too,
How every pause is filled with under-notes,
Clear, silver, icy, keen awakening tones,
Which pierce the sense, and live within the soul,

As the sharp stars pierce winter's crystal air
And gaze upon themselves within the sea.

PANTHEA
But see where, through two openings in the forest
Which hanging branches overcanopy,
And where two runnels of a rivulet,
Between the close moss violet-inwoven,
Have made their path of melody, like sisters
Who part with sighs that they may meet in smiles,
Turning their dear disunion to an isle
Of lovely grief, a wood of sweet sad thoughts;
Two visions of strange radiance float upon
The ocean-like enchantment of strong sound,
Which flows intenser, keener, deeper yet,
Under the ground and through the windless air.

IONE
I see a chariot like that thinnest boat
In which the mother of the months is borne
By ebbing night into her western cave,
When she upsprings from interlunar dreams;
O'er which is curved an orb-like canopy
Of gentle darkness, and the hills and woods,
Distinctly seen through that dusk airy veil,
Regard like shapes in an enchanter's glass;
Its wheels are solid clouds, azure and gold,
Such as the genii of the thunder-storm
Pile on the floor of the illumined sea
When the sun rushes under it; they roll
And move and grow as with an inward wind;
Within it sits a wingèd infant — white
Its countenance, like the whiteness of bright snow,
Its plumes are as feathers of sunny frost,
Its limbs gleam white, through the wind-flowing folds
Of its white robe, woof of ethereal pearl,
Its hair is white, the brightness of white light

Scattered in strings; yet its two eyes are heavens
Of liquid darkness, which the Deity
Within seems pouring, as a storm is poured
From jagged clouds, out of their arrowy lashes,
Tempering the cold and radiant air around
With fire that is not brightness; in its hand
It sways a quivering moonbeam, from whose point
A guiding power directs the chariot's prow
Over its wheelèd clouds, which as they roll
Over the grass, and flowers, and waves, wake sounds,
Sweet as a singing rain of silver dew.

PANTHEA
And from the other opening in the wood
Rushes, with loud and whirlwind harmony,
A sphere, which is as many thousand spheres;
Solid as crystal, yet through all its mass
Flow, as through empty space, music and light;
Ten thousand orbs involving and involved,
Purple and azure, white, green and golden,
Sphere within sphere; and every space between
Peopled with unimaginable shapes,
Such as ghosts dream dwell in the lampless deep;
Yet each inter-transpicuous; and they whirl
Over each other with a thousand motions,
Upon a thousand sightless axles spinning,
And with the force of self-destroying swiftness,
Intensely, slowly, solemnly, roll on,
Kindling with mingled sounds, and many tones,
Intelligible words and music wild.
With mighty whirl the multitudinous orb
Grinds the bright brook into an azure mist
Of elemental subtlety, like light;
And the wild odor of the forest flowers,
The music of the living grass and air,
The emerald light of leaf-entangled beams,
Round its intense yet self-conflicting speed

Seem kneaded into one aërial mass
Which drowns the sense. Within the orb itself,
Pillowed upon its alabaster arms,
Like to a child o'erwearied with sweet toil,
On its own folded wings and wavy hair
The Spirit of the Earth is laid asleep,
And you can see its little lips are moving,
Amid the changing light of their own smiles,
Like one who talks of what he loves in dream.

IONE
'T is only mocking the orb's harmony.

PANTHEA
And from a star upon its forehead shoot,
Like swords of azure fire or golden spears
With tyrant-quelling myrtle overtwined,
Embleming heaven and earth united now,
Vast beams like spokes of some invisible wheel
Which whirl as the orb whirls, swifter than thought,
Filling the abyss with sun-like lightnings,
And perpendicular now, and now transverse,
Pierce the dark soil, and as they pierce and pass
Make bare the secrets of the earth's deep heart;
Infinite mine of adamant and gold,
Valueless stones, and unimagined gems,
And caverns on crystalline columns poised
With vegetable silver overspread;
Wells of unfathomed fire, and water-springs
Whence the great sea even as a child is fed,
Whose vapors clothe earth's monarch mountain-tops
With kingly, ermine snow. The beams flash on
And make appear the melancholy ruins
Of cancelled cycles; anchors, beaks of ships;
Planks turned to marble; quivers, helms, and spears,
And gorgon-headed targes, and the wheels
Of scythèd chariots, and the emblazonry

Of trophies, standards, and armorial beasts,
Round which death laughed, sepulchred emblems
Of dead destruction, ruin within ruin!
The wrecks beside of many a city vast,
Whose population which the earth grew over
Was mortal, but not human; see, they lie,
Their monstrous works, and uncouth skeletons,
Their statues, homes and fanes; prodigious shapes
Huddled in gray annihilation, split,
Jammed in the hard, black deep; and over these,
The anatomies of unknown wingèd things,
And fishes which were isles of living scale,
And serpents, bony chains, twisted around
The iron crags, or within heaps of dust
To which the tortuous strength of their last pangs
Had crushed the iron crags; and over these
The jagged alligator, and the might
Of earth-convulsing behemoth, which once
Were monarch beasts, and on the slimy shores,
And weed-overgrown continents of earth,
Increased and multiplied like summer worms
On an abandoned corpse, till the blue globe
Wrapped deluge round it like a cloke, and they
Yelled, gasped, and were abolished; or some God,
Whose throne was in a comet, passed, and cried,
Be not! and like my words they were no more.

THE EARTH
The joy, the triumph, the delight, the madness!
The boundless, overflowing, bursting gladness,
The vaporous exultation not to be confined!
Ha! ha! the animation of delight
Which wraps me, like an atmosphere of light,
And bears me as a cloud is borne by its own wind.

THE MOON
Brother mine, calm wanderer,

Happy globe of land and air,
Some Spirit is darted like a beam from thee,
Which penetrates my frozen frame,
And passes with the warmth of flame,
With love, and odor, and deep melody
Through me, through me!

THE EARTH
Ha! ha! the caverns of my hollow mountains,
My cloven fire-crags, sound-exulting fountains,
Laugh with a vast and inextinguishable laughter.
The oceans, and the deserts, and the abysses,
And the deep air's unmeasured wildernesses,
Answer from all their clouds and billows, echoing after.

They cry aloud as I do. Sceptred curse,
Who all our green and azure universe
Threatenedst to muffle round with black destruction, sending
A solid cloud to rain hot thunder-stones
And splinter and knead down my children's bones,
All I bring forth, to one void mass battering and blending,

Until each crag-like tower, and storied column,
Palace, and obelisk, and temple solemn,
My imperial mountains crowned with cloud, and snow, and fire,
My sea-like forests, every blade and blossom
Which finds a grave or cradle in my bosom,
Were stamped by thy strong hate into a lifeless mire:

How art thou sunk, withdrawn, covered, drunk up
By thirsty nothing, as the brackish cup
Drained by a desert-troop, a little drop for all;
And from beneath, around, within, above,
Filling thy void annihilation, love
Bursts in like light on caves cloven by the thunder-ball!

THE MOON
The snow upon my lifeless mountains

Is loosened into living fountains,
My solid oceans flow, and sing and shine;
A spirit from my heart bursts forth,
It clothes with unexpected birth
My cold bare bosom. Oh, it must be thine
On mine, on mine!

Gazing on thee I feel, I know,
Green stalks burst forth, and bright flowers grow,
And living shapes upon my bosom move;
Music is in the sea and air,
Wingèd clouds soar here and there
Dark with the rain new buds are dreaming of:
'T is love, all love!

THE EARTH
It interpenetrates my granite mass,
Through tangled roots and trodden clay doth pass
Into the utmost leaves and delicatest flowers;
Upon the winds, among the clouds 't is spread,
It wakes a life in the forgotten dead, —
They breathe a spirit up from their obscurest bowers;

And like a storm bursting its cloudy prison
With thunder, and with whirlwind, has arisen
Out of the lampless caves of unimagined being;
With earthquake shock and swiftness making shiver
Thought's stagnant chaos, unremoved forever,
Till hate, and fear, and pain, light-vanquished shadows, fleeing,

Leave Man, who was a many-sided mirror
Which could distort to many a shape of error
This true fair world of things, a sea reflecting love;
Which over all his kind, as the sun's heaven
Gliding o'er ocean, smooth, serene, and even,
Darting from starry depths radiance and life doth move:

Leave Man even as a leprous child is left,
Who follows a sick beast to some warm cleft
Of rocks, through which the might of healing springs is
poured;
Then when it wanders home with rosy smile,
Unconscious, and its mother fears awhile
It is a spirit, then weeps on her child restored:

Man, oh, not men! a chain of linkèd thought,
Of love and might to be divided not,
Compelling the elements with adamantine stress;
As the sun rules even with a tyrant's gaze
The unquiet republic of the maze
Of planets, struggling fierce towards heaven's free wilderness:

Man, one harmonious soul of many a soul,
Whose nature is its own divine control,
Where all things flow to all, as rivers to the sea;
Familiar acts are beautiful through love;
Labor, and pain, and grief, in life's green grove
Sport like tame beasts; none knew how gentle they could be!

His will, with all mean passions, bad delights,
And selfish cares, its trembling satellites,
A spirit ill to guide, but mighty to obey,
Is as a tempest-wingèd ship, whose helm
Love rules, through waves which dare not overwhelm,
Forcing life's wildest shores to own its sovereign sway.

All things confess his strength. Through the cold mass
Of marble and of color his dreams pass —
Bright threads whence mothers weave the robes their children wear;
Language is a perpetual Orphic song,
Which rules with dædal harmony a throng
Of thoughts and forms, which else senseless and shapeless were.

The lightning is his slave; heaven's utmost deep
Gives up her stars, and like a flock of sheep

They pass before his eye, are numbered, and roll on!
The tempest is his steed, he strides the air;
And the abyss shouts from her depth laid bare,
‘Heaven, hast thou secrets? Man unveils me; I have none.’

THE MOON
The shadow of white death has passed
From my path in heaven at last,
A clinging shroud of solid frost and sleep;
And through my newly woven bowers,
Wander happy paramours,
Less mighty, but as mild as those who keep
Thy vales more deep.

THE EARTH
As the dissolving warmth of dawn may fold
A half unfrozen dew-globe, green, and gold,
And crystalline, till it becomes a wingèd mist,
And wanders up the vault of the blue day,
Outlives the noon, and on the sun’s last ray
Hangs o’er the sea, a fleece of fire and amethyst.

THE MOON
Thou art folded, thou art lying
In the light which is undying
Of thine own joy, and heaven’s smile divine;
All suns and constellations shower
On thee a light, a life, a power,
Which doth array thy sphere; thou pourest thine
On mine, on mine!

THE EARTH
I spin beneath my pyramid of night
Which points into the heavens, dreaming delight,
Murmuring victorious joy in my enchanted sleep;
As a youth lulled in love-dreams faintly sighing,
Under the shadow of his beauty lying,
Which round his rest a watch of light and warmth doth keep.

THE MOON

As in the soft and sweet eclipse,
When soul meets soul on lovers' lips,
High hearts are calm, and brightest eyes are dull;
So when thy shadow falls on me,
Then am I mute and still, by thee
Covered; of thy love, Orb most beautiful,
Full, oh, too full!

Thou art speeding round the sun,
Brightest world of many a one;
Green and azure sphere which shinest
With a light which is divinest
Among all the lamps of Heaven
To whom life and light is given;
I, thy crystal paramour,
Borne beside thee by a power
Like the polar Paradise,
Magnet-like, of lovers' eyes;
I, a most enamoured maiden,
Whose weak brain is overladen
With the pleasure of her love,
Maniac-like around thee move,
Gazing, an insatiate bride,
On thy form from every side,
Like a Mænad round the cup
Which Agave lifted up
In the weird Cadmean forest.
Brother, wheresoe'er thou soarest
I must hurry, whirl and follow
Through the heavens wide and hollow,
Sheltered by the warm embrace
Of thy soul from hungry space,
Drinking from thy sense and sight
Beauty, majesty and might,
As a lover or a chameleon
Grows like what it looks upon,

As a violet's gentle eye
Gazes on the azure sky
Until its hue grows like what it beholds,
As a gray and watery mist
Glows like solid amethyst
Athwart the western mountain it enfolds,
When the sunset sleeps
Upon its snow.

THE EARTH
And the weak day weeps
That it should be so.
O gentle Moon, the voice of thy delight
Falls on me like thy clear and tender light
Soothing the seaman borne the summer night
Through isles forever calm;
O gentle Moon, thy crystal accents pierce
The caverns of my pride's deep universe,
Charming the tiger joy, whose tramplings fierce
Made wounds which need thy balm.

PANTHEA
I rise as from a bath of sparkling water,
A bath of azure light, among dark rocks,
Out of the stream of sound.

IONE
Ah me! sweet sister,
The stream of sound has ebbed away from us,
And you pretend to rise out of its wave,
Because your words fall like the clear soft dew
Shaken from a bathing wood-nymph's limbs and hair.

PANTHEA
Peace, peace! a mighty Power, which is as darkness,
Is rising out of Earth, and from the sky
Is showered like night, and from within the air
Bursts, like eclipse which had been gathered up

Into the pores of sunlight; the bright visions,
Wherein the singing Spirits rode and shone,
Gleam like pale meteors through a watery night.

IONE
There is a sense of words upon mine ear.

PANTHEA
An universal sound like words: Oh, list!

DEMOGORGON
Thou, Earth, calm empire of a happy soul,
Sphere of divinest shapes and harmonies,
Beautiful orb! gathering as thou dost roll
The love which paves thy path along the skies:

THE EARTH
I hear: I am as a drop of dew that dies.

DEMOGORGON
Thou, Moon, which gazest on the nightly Earth
With wonder, as it gazes upon thee;
Whilst each to men, and beasts, and the swift birth
Of birds, is beauty, love, calm, harmony:

THE MOON
I hear: I am a leaf shaken by thee.

DEMOGORGON
Ye kings of suns and stars, Dæmons and Gods,
Ethereal Dominations, who possess
Elysian, windless, fortunate abodes
Beyond Heaven's constellated wilderness:

A VOICE (*from above*)
Our great Republic hears: we are blessed, and bless.

DEMOGORGON
Ye happy dead, whom beams of brightest verse
Are clouds to hide, not colors to portray,
Whether your nature is that universe
Which once ye saw and suffered —

A VOICE FROM BENEATH
Or, as they
Whom we have left, we change and pass away.

DEMOGORGON
Ye elemental Genii, who have homes
From man's high mind even to the central stone
Of sullen lead; from Heaven's star-fretted domes
To the dull weed some sea-worm battens on:

A CONFUSED VOICE
We hear: thy words waken Oblivion.

DEMOGORGON
Spirits, whose homes are flesh; ye beasts and birds,
Ye worms and fish; ye living leaves and buds;
Lightning and wind; and ye untamable herds,
Meteors and mists, which throng air's solitudes:

A VOICE
Thy voice to us is wind among still woods.

DEMOGORGON
Man, who wert once a despot and a slave,
A dupe and a deceiver! a decay,
A traveller from the cradle to the grave
Through the dim night of this immortal day:

ALL
Speak: thy strong words may never pass away.

DEMOGORGON
This is the day which down the void abysm
At the Earth-born's spell yawns for Heaven's despotism,
And Conquest is dragged captive through the deep;
Love, from its awful throne of patient power
In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour
Of dread endurance, from the slippery, steep,
And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs
And folds over the world its healing wings.

Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance —
These are the seals of that most firm assurance
Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength;
And if, with infirm hand, Eternity,
Mother of many acts and hours, should free
The serpent that would clasp her with his length,
These are the spells by which to reassume
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life; Joy, Empire, and Victory!

OEDIPUS TYRANNUS

OR
SWELLFOOT THE TYRANT.
A TRAGEDY IN TWO ACTS
TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL DORIC.

‘Choose Reform or Civil War,
When through thy streets, instead of hare with dogs,
A CONSORT-QUEEN shall hunt a king with hogs,
Riding on the IONIAN MINOTAUR.’

Begun at the Baths of San Giuliano, near Pisa, August 24, 1819; published anonymously by J. Johnston, Cheapside (imprint C.F. Seyfang), 1820. On a threat of prosecution the publisher surrendered the whole impression, seven copies — the total number sold — excepted. “Oedipus” does not appear in the first edition of the “Poetical Works”, 1839, but it was included by Mrs. Shelley in the second edition of that year. Our text is that of the editio princeps, 1820.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

This Tragedy is one of a triad, or system of three Plays (an arrangement according to which the Greeks were accustomed to connect their dramatic representations), elucidating the wonderful and appalling fortunes of the SWELLFOOT dynasty. It was evidently written by some LEARNED THEBAN, and, from its characteristic dulness, apparently before the duties on the importation of ATTIC SALT had been repealed by the Boeotarchs. The tenderness with which he treats the PIGS proves him to have been a sus Boeotiae; possibly Epicuri de grege porcus; for, as the poet observes,

'A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind.'

No liberty has been taken with the translation of this remarkable piece of antiquity, except the suppressing a seditious and blasphemous Chorus of the Pigs and Bulls at the last Act. The work Hoydipouse (or more properly Oedipus) has been rendered literally SWELLFOOT, without its having been conceived necessary to determine whether a swelling of the hind or the fore feet of the Swinish Monarch is particularly indicated.

Should the remaining portions of this Tragedy be found, entitled, "Swellfoot in Angaria", and "Charite", the Translator might be tempted to give them to the reading Public.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

TYRANT SWELLFOOT, KING OF THEBES. IONA TAURINA, HIS QUEEN. MAMMON, ARCH-PRIEST OF FAMINE. PURGANAX, DAKRY, LAOCTONOS — WIZARDS, MINISTERS OF SWELLFOOT. THE GADFLY. THE LEECH. THE RAT. MOSES, THE SOW-GELDER. SOLOMON, THE PORKMAN. ZEPHANIAH, PIG-BUTCHER. THE MINOTAUR. CHORUS OF THE SWINISH MULTITUDE. GUARDS, ATTENDANTS, PRIESTS, ETC., ETC.
SCENE. — THEBES.

ACT 1.

SCENE 1.1. — A MAGNIFICENT TEMPLE, BUILT OF THIGH-BONES AND DEATH'S-HEADS, AND TILED WITH SCALPS. OVER THE ALTAR THE STATUE OF FAMINE, VEILED; A NUMBER OF BOARS, SOWS, AND SUCKING-PIGS, CROWNED WITH THISTLE, SHAMROCK, AND OAK, SITTING ON THE STEPS, AND CLINGING ROUND THE ALTAR OF THE TEMPLE.
ENTER SWELLFOOT, IN HIS ROYAL ROBES, WITHOUT PERCEIVING THE PIGS.

SWELLFOOT:
Thou supreme Goddess! by whose power divine
These graceful limbs are clothed in proud array
[HE CONTEMPLATES HIMSELF WITH SATISFACTION.]
Of gold and purple, and this kingly paunch
Swells like a sail before a favouring breeze,
And these most sacred nether promontories
Lie satisfied with layers of fat; and these
Boeotian cheeks, like Egypt's pyramid,
(Nor with less toil were their foundations laid),
Sustain the cone of my untroubled brain,
That point, the emblem of a pointless nothing!
Thou to whom Kings and laurelled Emperors,
Radical-butchers, Paper-money-millers,
Bishops and Deacons, and the entire army
Of those fat martyrs to the persecution
Of stifling turtle-soup, and brandy-devils,
Offer their secret vows! Thou plenteous Ceres
Of their Eleusis, hail!

SWINE:
Eigh! eigh! eigh! eigh!

SWELLFOOT:
Ha! what are ye,

Who, crowned with leaves devoted to the Furies,
Cling round this sacred shrine?

SWINE:
Aigh! aigh! aigh!

SWELLFOOT:
What! ye that are
The very beasts that, offered at her altar
With blood and groans, salt-cake, and fat, and inwards,
Ever propitiate her reluctant will
When taxes are withheld?

SWINE:
Ugh! ugh! ugh!

SWELLFOOT:
What! ye who grub
With filthy snouts my red potatoes up
In Allan's rushy bog? Who eat the oats
Up, from my cavalry in the Hebrides?
Who swill the hog-wash soup my cooks digest
From bones, and rags, and scraps of shoe-leather,
Which should be given to cleaner Pigs than you?

SWINE — SEMICHORUS 1:
The same, alas! the same;
Though only now the name
Of Pig remains to me.

SEMICHORUS 2:
If 'twere your kingly will
Us wretched Swine to kill,
What should we yield to thee?

SWELLFOOT:
Why, skin and bones, and some few hairs for mortar.

CHORUS OF SWINE:
I have heard your Laureate sing,
That pity was a royal thing;
Under your mighty ancestors, we Pigs
Were bless'd as nightingales on myrtle sprigs,
Or grasshoppers that live on noonday dew,
And sung, old annals tell, as sweetly too;
But now our sties are fallen in, we catch
The murrain and the mange, the scab and itch;
Sometimes your royal dogs tear down our thatch,
And then we seek the shelter of a ditch;
Hog-wash or grains, or ruta-baga, none
Has yet been ours since your reign begun.

FIRST SOW:
My Pigs, 'tis in vain to tug.

SECOND SOW:
I could almost eat my litter.

FIRST PIG:
I suck, but no milk will come from the dug.

SECOND PIG:
Our skin and our bones would be bitter.

THE BOARS:
We fight for this rag of greasy rug,
Though a trough of wash would be fitter.

SEMICHORUS:
Happier Swine were they than we,
Drowned in the Gadarean sea —
I wish that pity would drive out the devils,
Which in your royal bosom hold their revels,
And sink us in the waves of thy compassion!
Alas! the Pigs are an unhappy nation!
Now if your Majesty would have our bristles

To bind your mortar with, or fill our colons
With rich blood, or make brawn out of our gristles,
In policy — ask else your royal Solons —
You ought to give us hog-wash and clean straw,
And sties well thatched; besides it is the law!

SWELLFOOT:
This is sedition, and rank blasphemy!
Ho! there, my guards!
[ENTER A GUARD.]

GUARD:
Your sacred Majesty.

SWELLFOOT:
Call in the Jews, Solomon the court porkman,
Moses the sow-gelder, and Zephaniah
The hog-butcher.

GUARD:
They are in waiting, Sire.
[ENTER SOLOMON, MOSES, AND ZEPHANIAH.]

SWELLFOOT:
Out with your knife, old Moses, and spay those Sows
[THE PIGS RUN ABOUT IN CONSTERNATION.]
That load the earth with Pigs; cut close and deep.
Moral restraint I see has no effect,
Nor prostitution, nor our own example,
Starvation, typhus-fever, war, nor prison —
This was the art which the arch-priest of Famine
Hinted at in his charge to the Theban clergy —
Cut close and deep, good Moses.

MOSES:
Let your Majesty
Keep the Boars quiet, else —

SWELLFOOT:
Zephaniah, cut
That fat Hog's throat, the brute seems overfed;
Seditious hunks! to whine for want of grains.

ZEPHANIAH:
Your sacred Majesty, he has the dropsy; —
We shall find pints of hydatids in 's liver,
He has not half an inch of wholesome fat
Upon his carious ribs —

SWELLFOOT:
'Tis all the same,
He'll serve instead of riot money, when
Our murmuring troops bivouac in Thebes' streets
And January winds, after a day
Of butchering, will make them relish carrion.
Now, Solomon, I'll sell you in a lump
The whole kit of them.

SOLOMON:
Why, your Majesty,
I could not give —

SWELLFOOT:
Kill them out of the way,
That shall be price enough, and let me hear
Their everlasting grunts and whines no more!
[EXEUNT, DRIVING IN THE SWINE. ENTER MAMM0N, THE ARCH-PRIEST, AND PURGANAX, CHIEF OF THE COUNCIL OF WIZARDS.]

PURGANAX:
The future looks as black as death, a cloud,
Dark as the frown of Hell, hangs over it —
The troops grow mutinous — the revenue fails —
There's something rotten in us — for the level
Of the State slopes, its very bases topple,
The boldest turn their backs upon themselves!

MAMMON:
Why what's the matter, my dear fellow, now?
Do the troops mutiny? — decimate some regiments;
Does money fail? — come to my mint — coin paper,
Till gold be at a discount, and ashamed
To show his bilious face, go purge himself,
In emulation of her vestal whiteness.

PURGANAX:
Oh, would that this were all! The oracle!!

MAMMON:
Why it was I who spoke that oracle,
And whether I was dead drunk or inspired,
I cannot well remember; nor, in truth,
The oracle itself!

PURGANAX:
The words went thus: —
'Boeotia, choose reform or civil war!
When through the streets, instead of hare with dogs,
A Consort Queen shall hunt a King with Hogs,
Riding on the Ionian Minotaur.'

MAMMON:
Now if the oracle had ne'er foretold
This sad alternative, it must arrive,
Or not, and so it must now that it has;
And whether I was urged by grace divine
Or Lesbian liquor to declare these words,
Which must, as all words must, he false or true,
It matters not: for the same Power made all,
Oracle, wine, and me and you — or none —
'Tis the same thing. If you knew as much
Of oracles as I do —

PURGANAX:
You arch-priests

Believe in nothing; if you were to dream
Of a particular number in the Lottery,
You would not buy the ticket?

MAMMON:
Yet our tickets
Are seldom blanks. But what steps have you taken?
For prophecies, when once they get abroad,
Like liars who tell the truth to serve their ends,
Or hypocrites who, from assuming virtue,
Do the same actions that the virtuous do,
Contrive their own fulfilment. This Iona —
Well — you know what the chaste Pasiphae did,
Wife to that most religious King of Crete,
And still how popular the tale is here;
And these dull Swine of Thebes boast their descent
From the free Minotaur. You know they still
Call themselves Bulls, though thus degenerate,
And everything relating to a Bull
Is popular and respectable in Thebes.
Their arms are seven Bulls in a field gules;
They think their strength consists in eating beef, —
Now there were danger in the precedent
If Queen Iona —

114 the edition 1820; thy cj. Forman;
cf. Motto below Title, and II. i, 153-6. ticket? edition 1820;
ticket! edition 1839.
135 their own Mrs. Shelley, later editions;
their editions 1820 and 1839.

PURGANAX:
I have taken good care
That shall not be. I struck the crust o' the earth
With this enchanted rod, and Hell lay bare!
And from a cavern full of ugly shapes
I chose a LEECH, a GADFLY, and a RAT.

The Gadfly was the same which Juno sent
To agitate Io, and which Ezekiel mentions
That the Lord whistled for out of the mountains
Of utmost Aethiopia, to torment
Mesopotamian Babylon. The beast
Has a loud trumpet like the scarabee,
His crooked tail is barbed with many stings,
Each able to make a thousand wounds, and each
Immedicable; from his convex eyes
He sees fair things in many hideous shapes,
And trumpets all his falsehood to the world.
Like other beetles he is fed on dung —
He has eleven feet with which he crawls,
Trailing a blistering slime, and this foul beast
Has tracked Iona from the Theban limits,
From isle to isle, from city unto city,
Urging her flight from the far Chersonese
To fabulous Solyma, and the Aetnean Isle,
Ortygia, Melite, and Calypso's Rock,
And the swart tribes of Garamant and Fez,
Aeolia and Elysium, and thy shores,
Parthenope, which now, alas! are free!
And through the fortunate Saturnian land,
Into the darkness of the West.

MAMMON:
But if
This Gadfly should drive Iona hither?

PURGANAX:
Gods! what an IF! but there is my gray RAT:
So thin with want, he can crawl in and out
Of any narrow chink and filthy hole,
And he shall creep into her dressing-room,
And —

MAMMON:
My dear friend, where are your wits? as if
She does not always toast a piece of cheese
And bait the trap? and rats, when lean enough
To crawl through SUCH chinks —

PURGANAX:
But my LEECH — a leech
Fit to suck blood, with lubricous round rings,
Capaciously expatiative, which make
His little body like a red balloon,
As full of blood as that of hydrogen,
Sucked from men's hearts; insatiably he sucks
And clings and pulls — a horse-leech, whose deep maw
The plethoric King Swellfoot could not fill,
And who, till full, will cling for ever.

MAMMON:
This
For Queen Jona would suffice, and less;
But 'tis the Swinish multitude I fear,
And in that fear I have —

PURGANAX:
Done what?

MAMMON:
Disinherited
My eldest son Chrysaor, because he
Attended public meetings, and would always
Stand prating there of commerce, public faith,
Economy, and unadulterate coin,
And other topics, ultra-radical;
And have entailed my estate, called the Fool's Paradise,
And funds in fairy-money, bonds, and bills,
Upon my accomplished daughter Banknotina,
And married her to the gallows.

PURGANAX:
A good match!

MAMMON:
A high connexion, Purganax. The bridegroom
Is of a very ancient family,
Of Hounslow Heath, Tyburn, and the New Drop,
And has great influence in both Houses; — oh!
He makes the fondest husband; nay, TOO fond, —
New-married people should not kiss in public;
But the poor souls love one another so!
And then my little grandchildren, the gibbets,
Promising children as you ever saw, —
The young playing at hanging, the elder learning
How to hold radicals. They are well taught too,
For every gibbet says its catechism
And reads a select chapter in the Bible
Before it goes to play.
[A MOST TREMENDOUS HUMMING IS HEARD.]

PURGANAX:
Ha! what do I hear?
[ENTER THE GADFLY.]

MAMMON:
Your Gadfly, as it seems, is tired of gadding.

GADFLY:
Hum! hum! hum!
From the lakes of the Alps, and the cold gray scalps
Of the mountains, I come!
Hum! hum! hum!
From Morocco and Fez, and the high palaces
Of golden Byzantium;
From the temples divine of old Palestine,
From Athens and Rome,
With a ha! and a hum!
I come! I come!

All inn-doors and windows
Were open to me:
I saw all that sin does,
Which lamps hardly see
That burn in the night by the curtained bed, —
The impudent lamps! for they blushed not red,
Dinging and singing,
From slumber I rung her,
Loud as the clank of an ironmonger;
Hum! hum! hum!

Far, far, far!
With the trump of my lips, and the sting at my hips,
I drove her — afar!
Far, far, far!
From city to city, abandoned of pity,
A ship without needle or star; —
Homeless she passed, like a cloud on the blast,
Seeking peace, finding war; —
She is here in her car,
From afar, and afar; —
Hum! hum!

I have stung her and wrung her,
The venom is working; —
And if you had hung her
With canting and quirking,
She could not be deader than she will be soon; —
I have driven her close to you, under the moon,
Night and day, hum! hum! ha!
I have hummed her and drummed her
From place to place, till at last I have dumbed her,
Hum! hum! hum!

[ENTER THE LEECH AND THE RAT.]

LEECH:
I will suck

Blood or muck!
The disease of the state is a plethory,
Who so fit to reduce it as I?

RAT:
I'll slily seize and
Let blood from her weasand, —
Creeping through crevice, and chink, and cranny,
With my snaky tail, and my sides so scranny.

PURGANAX:
Aroint ye! thou unprofitable worm!
[TO THE LEECH.]
And thou, dull beetle, get thee back to hell!
[TO THE GADFLY.]
To sting the ghosts of Babylonian kings,
And the ox-headed Io —

SWINE (WITHIN):
Ugh, ugh, ugh!
Hail! Iona the divine,
We will be no longer Swine,
But Bulls with horns and dewlaps.

RAT:
For,
You know, my lord, the Minotaur —

PURGANAX (FIERCELY):
Be silent! get to hell! or I will call
The cat out of the kitchen. Well, Lord Mammon,
This is a pretty business.
[EXIT THE RAT.]

MAMMON:
I will go
And spell some scheme to make it ugly then. —

[EXIT.]
[ENTER SWELLFOOT.]

SWELLFOOT:
She is returned! Taurina is in Thebes,
When Swellfoot wishes that she were in hell!
Oh, Hymen, clothed in yellow jealousy,
And waving o'er the couch of wedded kings
The torch of Discord with its fiery hair;
This is thy work, thou patron saint of queens!
Swellfoot is wived! though parted by the sea,
The very name of wife had conjugal rights;
Her cursed image ate, drank, slept with me,
And in the arms of Adiposa oft
Her memory has received a husband's —
[A LOUD TUMULT, AND CRIES OF 'IONA FOR EVER — NO SWELLFOOT!']
Hark!
How the Swine cry Iona Taurina;
I suffer the real presence; Purganax,
Off with her head!

PURGANAX:
But I must first impanel
A jury of the Pigs.

SWELLFOOT:
Pack them then.

PURGANAX:
Or fattening some few in two separate sties.
And giving them clean straw, tying some bits
Of ribbon round their legs — giving their Sows
Some tawdry lace, and bits of lustre glass,
And their young Boars white and red rags, and tails
Of cows, and jay feathers, and sticking cauliflowers
Between the ears of the old ones; and when
They are persuaded, that by the inherent virtue

Of these things, they are all imperial Pigs,
Good Lord! they'd rip each other's bellies up,
Not to say, help us in destroying her.

SWELLFOOT:
This plan might be tried too; — where's General Laoctonos?
[ENTER LAOCTONOS AND DAKRY.]
It is my royal pleasure
That you, Lord General, bring the head and body,
If separate it would please me better, hither
Of Queen Iona.

LAOCTONOS:
That pleasure I well knew,
And made a charge with those battalions bold,
Called, from their dress and grin, the royal apes,
Upon the Swine, who in a hollow square
Enclosed her, and received the first attack
Like so many rhinoceroses, and then
Retreating in good order, with bare tusks
And wrinkled snouts presented to the foe,
Bore her in triumph to the public sty.
What is still worse, some Sows upon the ground
Have given the ape-guards apples, nuts, and gin,
And they all whisk their tails aloft, and cry,
'Long live Iona! down with Swellfoot!'

PURGANAX:
Hark!

THE SWINE (WITHOUT):
Long live Iona! down with Swellfoot!

DAKRY:

Went to the garret of the swineherd's tower,
Which overlooks the sty, and made a long
Harangue (all words) to the assembled Swine,
Of delicacy mercy, judgement, law,
Morals, and precedents, and purity,
Adultery, destitution, and divorce,
Piety, faith, and state necessity,
And how I loved the Queen! — and then I wept
With the pathos of my own eloquence,
And every tear turned to a mill-stone, which
Brained many a gaping Pig, and there was made
A slough of blood and brains upon the place,
Greased with the pounded bacon; round and round
The mill-stones rolled, ploughing the pavement up,
And hurling Sucking-Pigs into the air,
With dust and stones. —
[ENTER MAMMON.]

MAMMON:
I wonder that gray wizards
Like you should be so beardless in their schemes;
It had been but a point of policy
To keep Iona and the Swine apart.
Divide and rule! but ye have made a junction
Between two parties who will govern you
But for my art. — Behold this BAG! it is
The poison BAG of that Green Spider huge,
On which our spies skulked in ovation through
The streets of Thebes, when they were paved with dead:
A bane so much the deadlier fills it now
As calumny is worse than death, — for here
The Gadfly's venom, fifty times distilled,
Is mingled with the vomit of the Leech,
In due proportion, and black ratsbane, which
That very Rat, who, like the Pontic tyrant,
Nurtures himself on poison, dare not touch; —
All is sealed up with the broad seal of Fraud,

Who is the Devil's Lord High Chancellor,
And over it the Primate of all Hell
Murmured this pious baptism:—'Be thou called
The GREEN BAG; and this power and grace be thine:
That thy contents, on whomsoever poured,
Turn innocence to guilt, and gentlest looks
To savage, foul, and fierce deformity.
Let all baptized by thy infernal dew
Be called adulterer, drunkard, liar, wretch!
No name left out which orthodoxy loves,
Court Journal or legitimate Review! —
Be they called tyrant, beast, fool, glutton, lover
Of other wives and husbands than their own —
The heaviest sin on this side of the Alps!
Wither they to a ghastly caricature
Of what was human! — let not man or beast
Behold their face with unaverted eyes!
Or hear their names with ears that tingle not
With blood of indignation, rage, and shame!' —
This is a perilous liquor; — good my Lords. —
[SWELLFOOT APPROACHES TO TOUCH THE GREEN BAG.]
Beware! for God's sake, beware!-if you should break
The seal, and touch the fatal liquor —

PURGANAX:
There,
Give it to me. I have been used to handle
All sorts of poisons. His dread Majesty
Only desires to see the colour of it.

MAMMON:
Now, with a little common sense, my Lords,
Only undoing all that has been done
(Yet so as it may seem we but confirm it),
Our victory is assured. We must entice
Her Majesty from the sty, and make the Pigs
Believe that the contents of the GREEN BAG

Are the true test of guilt or innocence.
And that, if she be guilty, ‘twill transform her
To manifest deformity like guilt.
If innocent, she will become transfigured
Into an angel, such as they say she is;
And they will see her flying through the air,
So bright that she will dim the noonday sun;
Showering down blessings in the shape of comfits.
This, trust a priest, is just the sort of thing
Swine will believe. I’ll wager you will see them
Climbing upon the thatch of their low sties,
With pieces of smoked glass, to watch her sail
Among the clouds, and some will hold the flaps
Of one another’s ears between their teeth,
To catch the coming hail of comfits in.
You, Purganax, who have the gift o’ the gab,
Make them a solemn speech to this effect:
I go to put in readiness the feast
Kept to the honour of our goddess Famine,
Where, for more glory, let the ceremony
Take place of the uglification of the Queen.

DAKRY (TO SWELLFOOT):
I, as the keeper of your sacred conscience,
Humbly remind your Majesty that the care
Of your high office, as Man-milliner
To red Bellona, should not be deferred.

PURGANAX:
All part, in happier plight to meet again.
[EXEUNT.]

ACT 2.

SCENE 1.2: THE PUBLIC STY. THE B0ARS IN FULL ASSEMBLY. ENTER PUEGANAX.

PURGANAX:
Grant me your patience, Gentlemen and Boars,
Ye, by whose patience under public burthens
The glorious constitution of these sties
Subsists, and shall subsist. The Lean-Pig rates
Grow with the growing populace of Swine,
The taxes, that true source of Piggishness
(How can I find a more appropriate term
To include religion, morals, peace, and plenty,
And all that fit Boeotia as a nation
To teach the other nations how to live?),
Increase with Piggishness itself; and still
Does the revenue, that great spring of all
The patronage, and pensions, and by-payments,
Which free-born Pigs regard with jealous eyes,
Diminish, till at length, by glorious steps,
All the land's produce will be merged in taxes,
And the revenue will amount to — nothing!
The failure of a foreign market for
Sausages, bristles, and blood-puddings,
And such home manufactures, is but partial;
And, that the population of the Pigs,
Instead of hog-wash, has been fed on straw
And water, is a fact which is — you know —
That is — it is a state-necessity —
Temporary, of course. Those impious Pigs,
Who, by frequent squeaks, have dared impugn
The settled Swellfoot system, or to make
Irreverent mockery of the genuflexions
Inculcated by the arch-priest, have been whipped
Into a loyal and an orthodox whine.

Things being in this happy state, the Queen
Iona —

A LOUD CRY FROM THE PIGS:
She is innocent! most innocent!

PURGANAX:
That is the very thing that I was saying,
Gentlemen Swine; the Queen Iona being
Most innocent, no doubt, returns to Thebes,
And the lean Sows and Bears collect about her,
Wishing to make her think that WE believe
(I mean those more substantial Pigs, who swill
Rich hog-wash, while the others mouth damp straw)
That she is guilty; thus, the Lean-Pig faction
Seeks to obtain that hog-wash, which has been
Your immemorial right, and which I will
Maintain you in to the last drop of —

A BOAR (INTERRUPTING HIM):
What
Does any one accuse her of?

PURGANAX:
Why, no one
Makes ANY positive accusation; — but
There were hints dropped, and so the privy wizards
Conceived that it became them to advise
His Majesty to investigate their truth; —
Not for his own sake; he could be content
To let his wife play any pranks she pleased,
If, by that sufferance, HE could please the Pigs;
But then he fears the morals of the Swine,
The Sows especially, and what effect
It might produce upon the purity and
Religion of the rising generation
Of Sucking-Pigs, if it could be suspected

That Queen Iona —
[A PAUSE.]

FIRST BOAR:
Well, go on; we long
To hear what she can possibly have done.

PURGANAX:
Why, it is hinted, that a certain Bull —
Thus much is KNOWN: — the milk-white Bulls that feed
Beside Clitumnus and the crystal lakes
Of the Cisalpine mountains, in fresh dews
Of lotus-grass and blossoming asphodel
Sleeking their silken hair, and with sweet breath
Loading the morning winds until they faint
With living fragrance, are so beautiful! —
Well, I say nothing; — but Europa rode
On such a one from Asia into Crete,
And the enamoured sea grew calm beneath
His gliding beauty. And Pasiphae,
Iona's grandmother, — but SHE is innocent!
And that both you and I, and all assert.

FIRST BOAR:
Most innocent!

PURGANAX:
Behold this BAG; a bag —

SECOND BOAR:
Oh! no GREEN BAGS!! Jealousy's eyes are green,
Scorpions are green, and water-snakes, and efts,
And verdigris, and —

PURGANAX:
Honourable Swine,
In Piggish souls can prepossessions reign?
Allow me to remind you, grass is green —

All flesh is grass; — no bacon but is flesh —
Ye are but bacon. This divining BAG
(Which is not green, but only bacon colour)
Is filled with liquor, which if sprinkled o'er
A woman guilty of — we all know what —
Makes her so hideous, till she finds one blind
She never can commit the like again.
If innocent, she will turn into an angel,
And rain down blessings in the shape of comfits
As she flies up to heaven. Now, my proposal
Is to convert her sacred Majesty
Into an angel (as I am sure we shall do),
By pouring on her head this mystic water.
[SHOWING THE BAG.]
I know that she is innocent; I wish
Only to prove her so to all the world.

FIRST BOAR:
Excellent, just, and noble Purganax.

SECOND BOAR:
How glorious it will be to see her Majesty
Flying above our heads, her petticoats
Streaming like — like — like —

THIRD BOAR:
Anything.

PURGANAX:
Oh no!
But like a standard of an admiral's ship,
Or like the banner of a conquering host,
Or like a cloud dyed in the dying day,
Unravelled on the blast from a white mountain;
Or like a meteor, or a war-steed's mane,
Or waterfall from a dizzy precipice
Scattered upon the wind.

FIRST BOAR:
Or a cow's tail.

SECOND BOAR:
Or ANYTHING, as the learned Boar observed.

PURGANAX:
Gentlemen Boars, I move a resolution,
That her most sacred Majesty should be
Invited to attend the feast of Famine,
And to receive upon her chaste white body
Dews of Apotheosis from this BAG.
[A GREAT CONFUSION IS HEARD OF THE PIGS OUT OF DOORS, WHICH COMMUNICATES ITSELF TO THOSE WITHIN. DURING THE FIRST STROPHE, THE DOORS OF THE STY ARE STAVED IN, AND A NUMBER OF EXCEEDINGLY LEAN PIGS AND SOWS AND BOARS RUSH IN.]

SEMICHORUS 1:
No! Yes!

SEMICHORUS 2:
Yes! No!

SEMICHORUS 1:
A law!

SEMICHORUS 2:
A flaw!

SEMICHORUS 1:
Porkers, we shall lose our wash,
Or must share it with the Lean-Pigs!

FIRST BOAR:
Order! order! be not rash!
Was there ever such a scene, Pigs!

AN OLD SOW (RUSHING IN):
I never saw so fine a dash
Since I first began to wean Pigs.

SECOND BOAR (SOLEMNLY):
The Queen will be an angel time enough.
I vote, in form of an amendment, that
Purganax rub a little of that stuff
Upon his face.

PURGANAX [HIS HEART IS SEEN TO BEAT THROUGH HIS WAISTCOAT]:
Gods! What would ye be at?

SEMICHORUS 1:
Purganax has plainly shown a
Cloven foot and jackdaw feather.

SEMICHORUS 2:
I vote Swellfoot and Iona
Try the magic test together;
Whenever royal spouses bicker,
Both should try the magic liquor.

AN OLD BOAR [ASIDE]:
A miserable state is that of Pigs,
For if their drivers would tear caps and wigs,
The Swine must bite each other's ear therefore.

AN OLD SOW [ASIDE]:
A wretched lot Jove has assigned to Swine,
Squabbling makes Pig-herds hungry, and they dine
On bacon, and whip Sucking-Pigs the more.

CHORUS:
Hog-wash has been ta'en away:
If the Bull-Queen is divested,
We shall be in every way

Hunted, stripped, exposed, molested;
Let us do whate'er we may,
That she shall not be arrested.
QUEEN, we entrench you with walls of brawn,
And palisades of tusks, sharp as a bayonet:
Place your most sacred person here. We pawn
Our lives that none a finger dare to lay on it.
Those who wrong you, wrong us;
Those who hate you, hate us;
Those who sting you, sting us;
Those who bait you, bait us;
The ORACLE is now about to be
Fulfilled by circumvolving destiny;
Which says: 'Thebes, choose REFORM or CIVIL WAR,
When through your streets, instead of hare with dogs,
A CONSORT QUEEN shall hunt a KING with Hogs,
Riding upon the IONIAN MINOTAUR.'

[ENTER IONA TAURINA.]

IONA TAURINA (COMING FORWARD):
Gentlemen Swine, and gentle Lady-Pigs,
The tender heart of every Boar acquits
Their QUEEN, of any act incongruous
With native Piggishness, and she, reposing
With confidence upon the grunting nation,
Has thrown herself, her cause, her life, her all,
Her innocence, into their Hoggish arms;
Nor has the expectation been deceived
Of finding shelter there. Yet know, great Boars,
(For such whoever lives among you finds you,
And so do I), the innocent are proud!
I have accepted your protection only
In compliment of your kind love and care,
Not for necessity. The innocent
Are safest there where trials and dangers wait;
Innocent Queens o'er white-hot ploughshares tread

Unsinged, and ladies, Erin's laureate sings it,
Decked with rare gems, and beauty rarer still,
Walked from Killarney to the Giant's Causeway,
Through rebels, smugglers, troops of yeomanry,
White-boys and Orange-boys, and constables,
Tithe-proctors, and excise people, uninjured!
Thus I! —
Lord Purganax, I do commit myself
Into your custody, and am prepared
To stand the test, whatever it may be!

PURGANAX:
This magnanimity in your sacred Majesty
Must please the Pigs. You cannot fail of being
A heavenly angel. Smoke your bits of glass,
Ye loyal Swine, or her transfiguration
Will blind your wondering eyes.

AN OLD BOAR [ASIDE]:
Take care, my Lord,
They do not smoke you first.

PURGANAX:
At the approaching feast
Of Famine, let the expiation be.

SWINE:
Content! content!

IONA TAURINA [ASIDE]:
I, most content of all,
Know that my foes even thus prepare their fall!
[EXEUNT OMNES.]

SCENE 2.2: THE INTERIOR OF THE TEMPLE OF FAMINE. THE STATUE OF THE GODDESS, A SKELETON CLOTHED IN PARTI-COLOURED RAGS, SEATED UPON A HEAP OF SKULLS AND LOAVES INTERMINGLED. A NUMBER OF EXCEEDINGLY FAT PRIESTS IN BLACK GARMENTS ARRAYED ON EACH SIDE, WITH

MARROW-BONES AND CLEAVERS IN THEIR HANDS. [SOLOMON, THE COURT PORKMAN.] A FLOURISH OF TRUMPETS.
ENTER MAMMON AS ARCH-PRIEST, SWELLFOOT, DAKRY, PURGANAX, LAOCTONOS, FOLLOWED BY IONA TAURINA GUARDED. ON THE OTHER SIDE ENTER THE SWINE.

CHORUS OF PRIESTS, ACCOMPANIED BY THE COURT PORKMAN ON MARROW-BONES
AND CLEAVERS:
GODDESS bare, and gaunt, and pale,
Empress of the world, all hail!
What though Cretans old called thee
City-crested Cybele?
We call thee FAMINE!
Goddess of fasts and feasts, starving and cramming!
Through thee, for emperors, kings, and priests and lords,
Who rule by viziers, sceptres, bank-notes, words,
The earth pours forth its plenteous fruits,
Corn, wool, linen, flesh, and roots —
Those who consume these fruits through thee grow fat,
Those who produce these fruits through thee grow lean,
Whatever change takes place, oh, stick to that!
And let things be as they have ever been;
At least while we remain thy priests,
And proclaim thy fasts and feasts.
Through thee the sacred SWELLF00T dynasty
Is based upon a rock amid that sea
Whose waves are Swine — so let it ever be!
[SWELLFOOT, ETC., SEAT THEMSELVES AT A TABLE MAGNIFICENTLY COVERED AT THE UPPER END OF THE TEMPLE. ATTENDANTS PASS OVER THE STAGE WITH HOG-WASH IN PAILS. A NUMBER OF PIGS, EXCEEDINGLY LEAN, FOLLOW THEM LICKING UP THE WASH.]

MAMMON:
I fear your sacred Majesty has lost
The appetite which you were used to have.

Allow me now to recommend this dish —
A simple kickshaw by your Persian cook,
Such as is served at the great King's second table.
The price and pains which its ingredients cost
Might have maintained some dozen families
A winter or two — not more — so plain a dish
Could scarcely disagree. —

SWELLFOOT:
After the trial,
And these fastidious Pigs are gone, perhaps
I may recover my lost appetite, —
I feel the gout flying about my stomach —
Give me a glass of Maraschino punch.

PURGANAX (FILLING HIS GLASS, AND STANDING UP):
The glorious Constitution of the Pigs!

ALL:
A toast! a toast! stand up, and three times three!

DAKRY:
No heel-taps — darken daylights! —

LAOCTONOS:
Claret, somehow,
Puts me in mind of blood, and blood of claret!

SWELLFOOT:
Laoctonos is fishing for a compliment,
But 'tis his due. Yes, you have drunk more wine,
And shed more blood, than any man in Thebes.
[TO PURGANAX.]
For God's sake stop the grunting of those Pigs!

PURGANAX:
We dare not, Sire, 'tis Famine's privilege.

CHORUS OF SWINE:
Hail to thee, hail to thee, Famine!
Thy throne is on blood, and thy robe is of rags;
Thou devil which livest on damning;
Saint of new churches, and cant, and GREEN BAGS,
Till in pity and terror thou risest,
Confounding the schemes of the wisest;
When thou liftest thy skeleton form,
When the loaves and the skulls roll about,
We will greet thee-the voice of a storm
Would be lost in our terrible shout!

Then hail to thee, hail to thee, Famine!
Hail to thee, Empress of Earth!
When thou risest, dividing possessions;
When thou risest, uprooting oppressions,
In the pride of thy ghastly mirth;
Over palaces, temples, and graves,
We will rush as thy minister-slaves,
Trampling behind in thy train,
Till all be made level again!

MAMMON:
I hear a crackling of the giant bones
Of the dread image, and in the black pits
Which once were eyes, I see two livid flames.
These prodigies are oracular, and show
The presence of the unseen Deity.
Mighty events are hastening to their doom!

SWELLFOOT:
I only hear the lean and mutinous Swine
Grunting about the temple.

DAKRY:
In a crisis
Of such exceeding delicacy, I think

We ought to put her Majesty, the QUEEN,
Upon her trial without delay.

MAMMON:
THE BAG
Is here.

PURGANAX:
I have rehearsed the entire scene
With an ox-bladder and some ditchwater,
On Lady P — ; it cannot fail.
[TAKING UP THE BAG.]
Your Majesty
[TO SWELLFOOT.]
In such a filthy business had better
Stand on one side, lest it should sprinkle you.
A spot or two on me would do no harm,
Nay, it might hide the blood, which the sad Genius
Of the Green Isle has fixed, as by a spell,
Upon my brow — which would stain all its seas,
But which those seas could never wash away!

IONA TAURINA:
My Lord, I am ready — nay, I am impatient
To undergo the test.
[A GRACEFUL FIGURE IN A SEMI-TRANSPARENT VEIL PASSES UNNOTICED THROUGH
THE TEMPLE; THE WORD “LIBERTY” IS SEEN THROUGH THE VEIL, AS IF IT WERE
WRITTEN IN FIRE UPON ITS FOREHEAD. ITS WORDS ARE ALMOST DROWNED IN THE
FURIOUS GRUNTING OF THE PIGS, AND THE BUSINESS OF THE TRIAL. SHE
KNEELS ON THE STEPS OF THE ALTAR, AND SPEAKS IN TONES AT FIRST FAINT
AND LOW, BUT WHICH EVER BECOME LOUDER AND LOUDER.]
Mighty Empress! Death’s white wife!

Ghastly mother-in-law of Life!
By the God who made thee such,
By the magic of thy touch,
By the starving and the cramming
Of fasts and feasts! by thy dread self, O Famine!
I charge thee! when thou wake the multitude,
Thou lead them not upon the paths of blood.
The earth did never mean her foison
For those who crown life's cup with poison
Of fanatic rage and meaningless revenge —
But for those radiant spirits, who are still
The standard-bearers in the van of Change.
Be they th' appointed stewards, to fill
The lap of Pain, and Toil, and Age! —
Remit, O Queen! thy accustomed rage!
Be what thou art not! In voice faint and low
FREEDOM calls "Famine", — her eternal foe,
To brief alliance, hollow truce. — Rise now!
[WHILST THE VEILED FIGURE HAS BEEN CHANTING THIS STROPHE, MAMMON, DAKRY, LAOCTONOS, AND SWELLFOOT, HAVE SURROUNDED IONA TAURINA, WHO, WITH HER HANDS FOLDED ON HER BREAST, AND HER EYES LIFTED TO HEAVEN, STANDS, AS WITH SAINT-LIKE RESIGNATION, TO WAIT THE ISSUE OF THE BUSINESS, IN PERFECT CONFIDENCE OF HER INNOCENCE.]
[PURGANAX, AFTER UNSEALING THE GREEN BAG, IS GRAVELY ABOUT TO POUR THE LIQUOR UPON HER HEAD, WHEN SUDDENLY THE WHOLE EXPRESSION OF HER FIGURE AND COUNTENANCE CHANGES; SHE SNATCHES IT FROM HIS HAND WITH A LOUD LAUGH OF TRIUMPH, AND EMPTIES IT OVER SWELLFOOT AND HIS WHOLE COURT, WHO ARE INSTANTLY CHANGED INTO A NUMBER OF FILTHY AND UGLY ANIMALS, AND RUSH OUT OF THE TEMPLE. THE IMAGE OF FAMINE THEN ARISES WITH A TREMENDOUS SOUND, THE PIGS BEGIN SCRAMBLING FOR THE LOAVES, AND ARE TRJPPED UP BY THE SKULLS; ALL THOSE WHO EAT THE LOAVES ARE TURNED INTO BULLS, AND ARRANGE THEMSELVES QUIETLY BEHIND THE

ALTAR. THE IMAGE OF FAMINE SINKS THROUGH A CHASM IN THE EARTH, AND A MINOTAUR RISES.]

MINOTAUR:
I am the Ionian Minotaur, the mightiest
Of all Europa's taurine progeny —
I am the old traditional Man-Bull;
And from my ancestors having been Ionian,
I am called Ion, which, by interpretation,
Is JOHN; in plain Theban, that is to say,
My name's JOHN BULL; I am a famous hunter,
And can leaf any gate in all Boeotia,
Even the palings of the royal park,
Or double ditch about the new enclosures;
And if your Majesty will deign to mount me,
At least till you have hunted down your game,
I will not throw you.

IONA TAURINA [DURING THIS SPEECH SHE HAS BEEN PUTTING ON BOOTS AND
SPURS, AND A HUNTING-CAP, BUCKISHLY COCKED ON ONE SIDE, AND TUCKING UP
HER HAIR, SHE LEAPS NIMBLY ON HIS BACK]:
Hoa! hoa! tallyho! tallyho! ho! ho!
Come, let us hunt these ugly badgers down,
These stinking foxes, these devouring otters,
These hares, these wolves, these anything but men.
Hey, for a whipper-in! my loyal Pigs
Now let your noses be as keen as beagles',
Your steps as swift as greyhounds', and your cries
More dulcet and symphonious than the bells
Of village-towers, on sunshine holiday;
Wake all the dewy woods with jangling music.
Give them no law (are they not beasts of blood?)
But such as they gave you. Tallyho! ho!
Through forest, furze, and bog, and den, and desert,
Pursue the ugly beasts! tallyho! ho!

FULL CHORUS OF I0NA AND THE SWINE:
Tallyho! tallyho!
Through rain, hail, and snow,
Through brake, gorse, and briar,
Through fen, flood, and mire,
We go! we go!

Tallyho! tallyho!
Through pond, ditch, and slough,
Wind them, and find them,
Like the Devil behind them,
Tallyho! tallyho!
[EXEUNT, IN FULL CRY; IONA DRIVING ON THE SWINE, WITH THE EMPTY GEEEN BAG.]
THE END.

HELLAS

A LYRICAL DRAMA.

MANTIS EIM EZTHLON AGONUN. — OEDIP. COLON.

This drama was composed at Pisa in the autumn of 1821, and dispatched to London, November 11. It was published, with the author's name, by C. & J. Ollier in the spring of 1822. A transcript of the poem by Edward Williams is in the Rowfant Library. Ollier availed himself of Shelley's permission to cancel certain passages in the notes; he also struck out certain lines of the text. These omissions were, some of them, restored in Galignani's one-volume edition of "Coleridge, Shelley and Keats", Paris, 1829, and also by Mrs. Shelley in the "Poetical Works", 1839. A passage in the "Preface", suppressed by Ollier, was restored by Mr. Buxton Forman (1892) from a proof copy of "Hellas" in his possession. The "Prologue to Hellas" was edited by Dr. Garnett in 1862 ("Relics of Shelley") from the manuscripts at Boscombe Manor. Our text is that of the editio princeps, 1822, corrected by a list of "Errata" sent by Shelley to Ollier, April 11, 1822.

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HELLAS

TO HIS EXCELLENCY
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LATE SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO THE HOSPODAR OF WALLACHIA
THE DRAMA OF HELLAS IS INSCRIBED AS AN
IMPERFECT TOKEN OF THE ADMIRATION,
SYMPATHY, AND FRIENDSHIP OF
THE AUTHOR.

Pisa, November 1, 1821.

PREFACE.

The poem of “Hellas”, written at the suggestion of the events of the moment, is a mere improvise, and derives its interest (should it be found to possess any) solely from the intense sympathy which the Author feels with the cause he would celebrate.

The subject, in its present state, is insusceptible of being treated otherwise than lyrically, and if I have called this poem a drama from the circumstance of its being composed in dialogue, the licence is not greater than that which has been assumed by other poets who have called their productions epics, only because they have been divided into twelve or twenty-four books.

The “Persae” of Aeschylus afforded me the first model of my conception, although the decision of the glorious contest now waging in Greece being yet suspended forbids a catastrophe parallel to the return of Xerxes and the desolation of the Persians. I have, therefore, contented myself with exhibiting a series of lyric pictures, and with having wrought upon the curtain of futurity, which falls upon the unfinished scene, such figures of indistinct and visionary delineation as suggest the final triumph of the Greek cause as a portion of the cause of civilisation and social improvement.

The drama (if drama it must be called) is, however, so inartificial that I doubt whether, if recited on the Thespian waggon to an Athenian village at the Dionysiaca, it would have obtained the prize of the goat. I shall bear with equanimity any punishment, greater than the loss of such a reward, which the Aristarchi of the hour may think fit to inflict.

The only “goat-song” which I have yet attempted has, I confess, in spite of the unfavourable nature of the subject, received a greater and a more valuable portion of applause than I expected or than it deserved.

Common fame is the only authority which I can allege for the details which form the basis of the poem, and I must trespass upon the forgiveness of my readers for the display of newspaper erudition to which I have been reduced. Undoubtedly, until the conclusion of the war, it will be impossible to obtain an account of it sufficiently authentic for historical materials; but poets have their privilege, and it is unquestionable that actions of the most exalted courage have been performed by the Greeks — that they have

gained more than one naval victory, and that their defeat in Wallachia was signalized by circumstances of heroism more glorious even than victory.

The apathy of the rulers of the civilised world to the astonishing circumstance of the descendants of that nation to which they owe their civilisation, rising as it were from the ashes of their ruin, is something perfectly inexplicable to a mere spectator of the shows of this mortal scene. We are all Greeks. Our laws, our literature, our religion, our arts have their root in Greece. But for Greece — Rome, the instructor, the conqueror, or the metropolis of our ancestors, would have spread no illumination with her arms, and we might still have been savages and idolaters; or, what is worse, might have arrived at such a stagnant and miserable state of social institution as China and Japan possess.

The human form and the human mind attained to a perfection in Greece which has impressed its image on those faultless productions, whose very fragments are the despair of modern art, and has propagated impulses which cannot cease, through a thousand channels of manifest or imperceptible operation, to ennoble and delight mankind until the extinction of the race.

The modern Greek is the descendant of those glorious beings whom the imagination almost refuses to figure to itself as belonging to our kind, and he inherits much of their sensibility, their rapidity of conception, their enthusiasm, and their courage. If in many instances he is degraded by moral and political slavery to the practice of the basest vices it engenders — and that below the level of ordinary degradation — let us reflect that the corruption of the best produces the worst, and that habits which subsist only in relation to a peculiar state of social institution may be expected to cease as soon as that relation is dissolved. In fact, the Greeks, since the admirable novel of Anastasius could have been a faithful picture of their manners, have undergone most important changes; the flower of their youth, returning to their country from the universities of Italy, Germany, and France, have communicated to their fellow-citizens the latest results of that social perfection of which their ancestors were the original source. The University of Chios contained before the breaking out of the revolution eight hundred students, and among them several Germans and Americans. The munificence and energy of many of the Greek princes and merchants, directed to the renovation of their country with a spirit and a wisdom which has few examples, is above all praise.

The English permit their own oppressors to act according to their natural sympathy with the Turkish tyrant, and to brand upon their name the indelible blot of an alliance with the enemies of domestic happiness, of Christianity and civilisation.

Russia desires to possess, not to liberate Greece; and is contented to see the Turks, its natural enemies, and the Greeks, its intended slaves, enfeeble each other until one or both fall into its net. The wise and generous policy of England would have consisted in establishing the independence of Greece, and in maintaining it both against Russia and the Turk; — but when was the oppressor generous or just?

[Should the English people ever become free, they will reflect upon the part which those who presume to represent their will have played in the great drama of the revival of liberty, with feelings which it would become them to anticipate. This is the age of the war of the oppressed against the oppressors, and every one of those ringleaders of the privileged gangs of murderers and swindlers, called Sovereigns, look to each other for aid against the common enemy, and suspend their mutual jealousies in the presence of a mightier fear. Of this holy alliance all the despots of the earth are virtual members. But a new race has arisen throughout Europe, nursed in the abhorrence of the opinions which are its chains, and she will continue to produce fresh generations to accomplish that destiny which tyrants foresee and dread. (This paragraph, suppressed in 1822 by Charles Ollier, was first restored in 1892 by Mr. Buxton Forman [“Poetical Works of P. B. S.”, volume 4 pages 40-41] from a proof copy of Hellas in his possession.]

The Spanish Peninsula is already free. France is tranquil in the enjoyment of a partial exemption from the abuses which its unnatural and feeble government are vainly attempting to revive. The seed of blood and misery has been sown in Italy, and a more vigorous race is arising to go forth to the harvest. The world waits only the news of a revolution of Germany to see the tyrants who have pinnacled themselves on its supineness precipitated into the ruin from which they shall never arise. Well do these destroyers of mankind know their enemy, when they impute the insurrection in Greece to the same spirit before which they tremble throughout the rest of Europe, and that enemy well knows the power and the cunning of its opponents, and watches the moment of their approaching weakness and inevitable division to wrest the bloody sceptres from their grasp.

PROLOGUE TO HELLAS.

HERALD OF ETERNITY:
It is the day when all the sons of God
Wait in the roofless senate-house, whose floor
Is Chaos, and the immovable abyss
Frozen by His steadfast word to hyaline

The shadow of God, and delegate
Of that before whose breath the universe
Is as a print of dew.
Hierarchs and kings
Who from your thrones pinnacled on the past
Sway the reluctant present, ye who sit
Pavilioned on the radiance or the gloom
Of mortal thought, which like an exhalation
Steaming from earth, conceals the … of heaven
Which gave it birth. … assemble here
Before your Father's throne; the swift decree
Yet hovers, and the fiery incarnation
Is yet withheld, clothed in which it shall
annul
The fairest of those wandering isles that gem
The sapphire space of interstellar air,
That green and azure sphere, that earth enwrapped
Less in the beauty of its tender light
Than in an atmosphere of living spirit
Which interpenetrating all the …
it rolls from realm to realm
And age to age, and in its ebb and flow
Impels the generations
To their appointed place,
Whilst the high Arbiter
Beholds the strife, and at the appointed time
Sends His decrees veiled in eternal…

Within the circuit of this pendent orb
There lies an antique region, on which fell
The dews of thought in the world's golden dawn
Earliest and most benign, and from it sprung
Temples and cities and immortal forms
And harmonies of wisdom and of song,
And thoughts, and deeds worthy of thoughts so fair.
And when the sun of its dominion failed,
And when the winter of its glory came,
The winds that stripped it bare blew on and swept
That dew into the utmost wildernesses
In wandering clouds of sunny rain that thawed
The unmaternal bosom of the North.
Haste, sons of God, … for ye beheld,
Reluctant, or consenting, or astonished,
The stern decrees go forth, which heaped on Greece
Ruin and degradation and despair.
A fourth now waits: assemble, sons of God,
To speed or to prevent or to suspend,
If, as ye dream, such power be not withheld,
The unaccomplished destiny.

…

CHORUS:
The curtain of the Universe
Is rent and shattered,
The splendour-winged worlds disperse
Like wild doves scattered.

Space is roofless and bare,
And in the midst a cloudy shrine,
Dark amid thrones of light.
In the blue glow of hyaline
Golden worlds revolve and shine.
In … flight
From every point of the Infinite,

Like a thousand dawns on a single night
The splendours rise and spread;
And through thunder and darkness dread
Light and music are radiated,
And in their pavilioned chariots led
By living wings high overhead
The giant Powers move,
Gloomy or bright as the thrones they fill.

…

A chaos of light and motion
Upon that glassy ocean.

…

The senate of the Gods is met,
Each in his rank and station set;
There is silence in the spaces —
Lo! Satan, Christ, and Mahomet
Start from their places!

CHRIST:
Almighty Father!
Low-kneeling at the feet of Destiny

…

There are two fountains in which spirits weep
When mortals err, Discord and Slavery named,
And with their bitter dew two Destinies
Filled each their irrevocable urns; the third
Fiercest and mightiest, mingled both, and added
Chaos and Death, and slow Oblivion's lymph,
And hate and terror, and the poisoned rain

…

The Aurora of the nations. By this brow
Whose pores wept tears of blood, by these wide wounds,
By this imperial crown of agony,
By infamy and solitude and death,
For this I underwent, and by the pain
Of pity for those who would … for me
The unremembered joy of a revenge,
For this I felt — by Plato's sacred light,
Of which my spirit was a burning morrow —
By Greece and all she cannot cease to be.
Her quenchless words, sparks of immortal truth,
Stars of all night — her harmonies and forms,
Echoes and shadows of what Love adores
In thee, I do compel thee, send forth Fate,
Thy irrevocable child: let her descend,
A seraph-winged Victory [arrayed]
In tempest of the omnipotence of God
Which sweeps through all things.

From hollow leagues, from Tyranny which arms
Adverse miscreeds and emulous anarchies
To stamp, as on a winged serpent's seed,
Upon the name of Freedom; from the storm
Of faction, which like earthquake shakes and sickens
The solid heart of enterprise; from all
By which the holiest dreams of highest spirits
Are stars beneath the dawn…
She shall arise
Victorious as the world arose from Chaos!
And as the Heavens and the Earth arrayed
Their presence in the beauty and the light
Of Thy first smile, O Father, — as they gather
The spirit of Thy love which paves for them
Their path o'er the abyss, till every sphere
Shall be one living Spirit, — so shall Greece —

SATAN:
Be as all things beneath the empyrean,
Mine! Art thou eyeless like old Destiny,
Thou mockery-king, crowned with a wreath of thorns?
Whose sceptre is a reed, the broken reed
Which pierces thee! whose throne a chair of scorn;
For seest thou not beneath this crystal floor
The innumerable worlds of golden light
Which are my empire, and the least of them
which thou wouldst redeem from me?
Know'st thou not them my portion?
Or wouldst rekindle the … strife
Which our great Father then did arbitrate
Which he assigned to his competing sons
Each his apportioned realm?
Thou Destiny,
Thou who art mailed in the omnipotence
Of Him who tends thee forth, whate'er thy task,
Speed, spare not to accomplish, and be mine
Thy trophies, whether Greece again become
The fountain in the desert whence the earth
Shall drink of freedom, which shall give it strength
To suffer, or a gulf of hollow death
To swallow all delight, all life, all hope.
Go, thou Vicegerent of my will, no less
Than of the Father's; but lest thou shouldst faint,
The winged hounds, Famine and Pestilence,
Shall wait on thee, the hundred-forked snake
Insatiate Superstition still shall…
The earth behind thy steps, and War shall hover
Above, and Fraud shall gape below, and Change
Shall flit before thee on her dragon wings,
Convulsing and consuming, and I add
Three vials of the tears which daemons weep
When virtuous spirits through the gate of Death
Pass triumphing over the thorns of life,
Sceptres and crowns, mitres and swords and snares,

Trampling in scorn, like Him and Socrates.
The first is Anarchy; when Power and Pleasure,
Glory and science and security,
On Freedom hang like fruit on the green tree,
Then pour it forth, and men shall gather ashes.
The second Tyranny —

CHRIST:
Obdurate spirit!
Thou seest but the Past in the To-come.
Pride is thy error and thy punishment.
Boast not thine empire, dream not that thy worlds
Are more than furnace-sparks or rainbow-drops
Before the Power that wields and kindles them.
True greatness asks not space, true excellence
Lives in the Spirit of all things that live,
Which lends it to the worlds thou callest thine.

…

MAHOMET:
…Haste thou and fill the waning crescent
With beams as keen as those which pierced the shadow
Of Christian night rolled back upon the West,
When the orient moon of Islam rode in triumph
From Tmolus to the Acroceraunian snow.

…

Wake, thou Word
Of God, and from the throne of Destiny
Even to the utmost limit of thy way
May Triumph

…

Be thou a curse on them whose creed
Divides and multiplies the most high God.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE:

MAHMUD. HASSAN. DAOOD. AHASUERUS, A JEW. CHORUS OF GREEK CAPTIVE WOMEN. [THE PHANTOM OF MAHOMET II. (OMITTED, EDITION 1822.)] MESSENGERS, SLAVES, AND ATTENDANTS.

SCENE: CONSTANTINOPLE.
TIME: SUNSET.
SCENE: A TERRACE ON THE SERAGLIO. MAHMUD SLEEPING, AN INDIAN SLAVE SITTING BESIDE HIS COUCH.

HELLAS

CHORUS OF GREEK CAPTIVE WOMEN:
We strew these opiate flowers
On thy restless pillow, —
They were stripped from Orient bowers,
By the Indian billow.
Be thy sleep
Calm and deep,
Like theirs who fell — not ours who weep!

INDIAN:
Away, unlovely dreams!
Away, false shapes of sleep
Be his, as Heaven seems,
Clear, and bright, and deep!
Soft as love, and calm as death,
Sweet as a summer night without a breath.

CHORUS:
Sleep, sleep! our song is laden
With the soul of slumber;
It was sung by a Samian maiden,
Whose lover was of the number
Who now keep
That calm sleep
Whence none may wake, where none shall weep.

INDIAN:
I touch thy temples pale!
I breathe my soul on thee!
And could my prayers avail,
All my joy should be
Dead, and I would live to weep,
So thou mightst win one hour of quiet sleep.

CHORUS:
Breathe low, low
The spell of the mighty mistress now!
When Conscience lulls her sated snake,
And Tyrants sleep, let Freedom wake.
Breathe low — low
The words which, like secret fire, shall flow
Through the veins of the frozen earth — low, low!

SEMICHORUS 1:
Life may change, but it may fly not;
Hope may vanish, but can die not;
Truth be veiled, but still it burneth;
Love repulsed, — but it returneth!

SEMICHORUS 2:
Yet were life a charnel where
Hope lay coffined with Despair;
Yet were truth a sacred lie,
Love were lust —

SEMICHORUS 1:
If Liberty
Lent not life its soul of light,
Hope its iris of delight,
Truth its prophet's robe to wear,
Love its power to give and bear.

CHORUS:
In the great morning of the world,
The Spirit of God with might unfurled
The flag of Freedom over Chaos,
And all its banded anarchs fled,
Like vultures frighted from Imaus,
Before an earthquake's tread. —
So from Time's tempestuous dawn
Freedom's splendour burst and shone: —
Thermopylae and Marathon

Caught like mountains beacon-lighted,
The springing Fire. — The winged glory
On Philippi half-alighted,
Like an eagle on a promontory.
Its unwearied wings could fan
The quenchless ashes of Milan.
From age to age, from man to man,
It lived; and lit from land to land
Florence, Albion, Switzerland.

Then night fell; and, as from night,
Reassuming fiery flight,
From the West swift Freedom came,
Against the course of Heaven and doom.
A second sun arrayed in flame,
To burn, to kindle, to illume.
From far Atlantis its young beams
Chased the shadows and the dreams.
France, with all her sanguine steams,
Hid, but quenched it not; again
Through clouds its shafts of glory rain
From utmost Germany to Spain.
As an eagle fed with morning
Scorns the embattled tempest's warning,
When she seeks her aerie hanging
In the mountain-cedar's hair,
And her brood expect the clanging
Of her wings through the wild air,
Sick with famine: — Freedom, so
To what of Greece remaineth now
Returns; her hoary ruins glow
Like Orient mountains lost in day;
Beneath the safety of her wings
Her renovated nurslings prey,
And in the naked lightenings
Of truth they purge their dazzled eyes.
Let Freedom leave — where'er she flies,

A Desert, or a Paradise:
Let the beautiful and the brave
Share her glory, or a grave.

SEMICHORUS 1:
With the gifts of gladness
Greece did thy cradle strew;

SEMICHORUS 2:
With the tears of sadness
Greece did thy shroud bedew!

SEMICHORUS 1:
With an orphan's affection
She followed thy bier through Time;

SEMICHORUS 2:
And at thy resurrection
Reappeareth, like thou, sublime!

SEMICHORUS 1:
If Heaven should resume thee,
To Heaven shall her spirit ascend;

SEMICHORUS 2:
If Hell should entomb thee,
To Hell shall her high hearts bend.

SEMICHORUS 1:
If Annihilation —

SEMICHORUS 2:
Dust let her glories be!
And a name and a nation
Be forgotten, Freedom, with thee!

INDIAN:
His brow grows darker — breathe not — move not!

He starts — he shudders — ye that love not,
With your panting loud and fast,
Have awakened him at last.

MAHMUD [STARTING FROM HIS SLEEP]:
Man the Seraglio-guard! make fast the gate!
What! from a cannonade of three short hours?
'Tis false! that breach towards the Bosphorus
Cannot be practicable yet — who stirs?
Stand to the match; that when the foe prevails
One spark may mix in reconciling ruin
The conqueror and the conquered! Heave the tower
Into the gap — wrench off the roof!
[ENTER HASSAN.]
Ha! what!
The truth of day lightens upon my dream
And I am Mahmud still.

HASSAN:
Your Sublime Highness
Is strangely moved.

MAHMUD:
The times do cast strange shadows
On those who watch and who must rule their course,
Lest they, being first in peril as in glory,
Be whelmed in the fierce ebb: — and these are of them.
Thrice has a gloomy vision hunted me
As thus from sleep into the troubled day;
It shakes me as the tempest shakes the sea,
Leaving no figure upon memory's glass.
Would that — no matter. Thou didst say thou knewest
A Jew, whose spirit is a chronicle
Of strange and secret and forgotten things.
I bade thee summon him:—'tis said his tribe
Dream, and are wise interpreters of dreams.

HASSAN:
The Jew of whom I spake is old, — so old
He seems to have outlived a world's decay;
The hoary mountains and the wrinkled ocean
Seem younger still than he; — his hair and beard
Are whiter than the tempest-sifted snow;
His cold pale limbs and pulseless arteries
Are like the fibres of a cloud instinct
With light, and to the soul that quickens them
Are as the atoms of the mountain-drift
To the winter wind: — but from his eye looks forth
A life of unconsumed thought which pierces
The Present, and the Past, and the To-come.
Some say that this is he whom the great prophet
Jesus, the son of Joseph, for his mockery,
Mocked with the curse of immortality.
Some feign that he is Enoch: others dream
He was pre-adamite and has survived
Cycles of generation and of ruin.
The sage, in truth, by dreadful abstinence
And conquering penance of the mutinous flesh,
Deep contemplation, and unwearied study,
In years outstretched beyond the date of man,
May have attained to sovereignty and science
Over those strong and secret things and thoughts
Which others fear and know not.

MAHMUD:
I would talk
With this old Jew.

HASSAN:
Thy will is even now
Made known to him, where he dwells in a sea-cavern
'Mid the Demonesi, less accessible
Than thou or God! He who would question him
Must sail alone at sunset, where the stream

Of Ocean sleeps around those foamless isles,
When the young moon is westering as now,
And evening airs wander upon the wave;
And when the pines of that bee-pasturing isle,
Green Erebinthus, quench the fiery shadow
Of his gilt prow within the sapphire water,
Then must the lonely helmsman cry aloud
'Ahasuerus!' and the caverns round
Will answer 'Ahasuerus!' If his prayer
Be granted, a faint meteor will arise
Lighting him over Marmora, and a wind
Will rush out of the sighing pine-forest,
And with the wind a storm of harmony
Unutterably sweet, and pilot him
Through the soft twilight to the Bosphorus:
Thence at the hour and place and circumstance
Fit for the matter of their conference
The Jew appears. Few dare, and few who dare
Win the desired communion — but that shout
Bodes —
[A SHOUT WITHIN.]

MAHMUD:
Evil, doubtless; Like all human sounds.
Let me converse with spirits.

HASSAN:
That shout again.

MAHMUD:
This Jew whom thou hast summoned —

HASSAN:
Will be here —

MAHMUD:
When the omnipotent hour to which are yoked
He, I, and all things shall compel — enough!

Silence those mutineers — that drunken crew,
That crowd about the pilot in the storm.
Ay! strike the foremost shorter by a head!
They weary me, and I have need of rest.
Kinks are like stars — they rise and set, they have
The worship of the world, but no repose.
[EXEUNT SEVERALLY.]

CHORUS:
Worlds on worlds are rolling ever
From creation to decay,
Like the bubbles on a river
Sparkling, bursting, borne away.
But they are still immortal
Who, through birth's orient portal
And death's dark chasm hurrying to and fro,
Clothe their unceasing flight
In the brief dust and light
Gathered around their chariots as they go;
New shapes they still may weave,
New gods, new laws receive,
Bright or dim are they as the robes they last
On Death's bare ribs had cast.

A power from the unknown God,
A Promethean conqueror, came;
Like a triumphal path he trod
The thorns of death and shame.
A mortal shape to him
Was like the vapour dim
Which the orient planet animates with light;
Hell, Sin, and Slavery came,
Like bloodhounds mild and tame,
Nor preyed, until their Lord had taken flight;
The moon of Mahomet
Arose, and it shall set:

While blazoned as on Heaven's immortal noon
The cross leads generations on.

Swift as the radiant shapes of sleep
From one whose dreams are Paradise
Fly, when the fond wretch wakes to weep,
And Day peers forth with her blank eyes;
So fleet, so faint, so fair,
The Powers of earth and air
Fled from the folding-star of Bethlehem:
Apollo, Pan, and Love,
And even Olympian Jove
Grew weak, for killing Truth had glared on them;
Our hills and seas and streams,
Dispeopled of their dreams,
Their waters turned to blood, their dew to tears,
Wailed for the golden years.
[ENTER MAHMUD, HASSAN, DAOOD, AND OTHERS.]

MAHMUD:
More gold? our ancestors bought gold with victory,
And shall I sell it for defeat?

DAOOD:
The Janizars
Clamour for pay.

MAHMUD:
Go! bid them pay themselves
With Christian blood! Are there no Grecian virgins
Whose shrieks and spasms and tears they may enjoy?
No infidel children to impale on spears?
No hoary priests after that Patriarch
Who bent the curse against his country's heart,
Which clove his own at last? Go! bid them kill,
Blood is the seed of gold.

DAOOD:
It has been sown,
And yet the harvest to the sicklemen
Is as a grain to each.

MAHMUD:
Then, take this signet,
Unlock the seventh chamber in which lie
The treasures of victorious Solyman, —
An empire's spoil stored for a day of ruin.
O spirit of my sires! is it not come?
The prey-birds and the wolves are gorged and sleep;
But these, who spread their feast on the red earth,
Hunger for gold, which fills not. — See them fed;
Then, lead them to the rivers of fresh death.
[EXIT DAOOD.]
O miserable dawn, after a night
More glorious than the day which it usurped!
O faith in God! O power on earth! O word
Of the great prophet, whose o'ershadowing wings
Darkened the thrones and idols of the West,
Now bright! — For thy sake cursed be the hour,
Even as a father by an evil child,
When the orient moon of Islam rolled in triumph
From Caucasus to White Ceraunia!
Ruin above, and anarchy below;
Terror without, and treachery within;
The Chalice of destruction full, and all
Thirsting to drink; and who among us dares
To dash it from his lips? and where is Hope?

HASSAN:
The lamp of our dominion still rides high;
One God is God — Mahomet is His prophet.
Four hundred thousand Moslems, from the limits
Of utmost Asia, irresistibly
Throng, like full clouds at the Sirocco's cry;

But not like them to weep their strength in tears:
They bear destroying lightning, and their step
Wakes earthquake to consume and overwhelm,
And reign in ruin. Phrygian Olympus,
Tmolus, and Latmos, and Mycale, roughen
With horrent arms; and lofty ships even now,
Like vapours anchored to a mountain's edge,
Freighted with fire and whirlwind, wait at Scala
The convoy of the ever-veering wind.
Samos is drunk with blood; — the Greek has paid
Brief victory with swift loss and long despair.
The false Moldavian serfs fled fast and far
When the fierce shout of 'Allah-illa-Allah!'
Rose like the war-cry of the northern wind
Which kills the sluggish clouds, and leaves a flock
Of wild swans struggling with the naked storm.
So were the lost Greeks on the Danube's day!
If night is mute, yet the returning sun
Kindles the voices of the morning birds;
Nor at thy bidding less exultingly
Than birds rejoicing in the golden day,
The Anarchies of Africa unleash
Their tempest-winged cities of the sea,
To speak in thunder to the rebel world.
Like sulphurous clouds, half-shattered by the storm,
They sweep the pale Aegean, while the Queen
Of Ocean, bound upon her island-throne,
Far in the West, sits mourning that her sons
Who frown on Freedom spare a smile for thee:
Russia still hovers, as an eagle might
Within a cloud, near which a kite and crane
Hang tangled in inextricable fight,
To stoop upon the victor; — for she fears
The name of Freedom, even as she hates thine.
But recreant Austria loves thee as the Grave
Loves Pestilence, and her slow dogs of war
Fleshed with the chase, come up from Italy,

And howl upon their limits; for they see
The panther, Freedom, fled to her old cover,
Amid seas and mountains, and a mightier brood
Crouch round. What Anarch wears a crown or mitre,
Or bears the sword, or grasps the key of gold,
Whose friends are not thy friends, whose foes thy foes?
Our arsenals and our armouries are full;
Our forts defy assault; ten thousand cannon
Lie ranged upon the beach, and hour by hour
Their earth-convulsing wheels affright the city;
The galloping of fiery steeds makes pale
The Christian merchant; and the yellow Jew
Hides his hoard deeper in the faithless earth.
Like clouds, and like the shadows of the clouds,
Over the hills of Anatolia,
Swift in wide troops the Tartar chivalry
Sweep; — the far flashing of their starry lances
Reverberates the dying light of day.
We have one God, one King, one Hope, one Law;
But many-headed Insurrection stands
Divided in itself, and soon must fall.

MAHMUD:
Proud words, when deeds come short, are seasonable:
Look, Hassan, on yon crescent moon, emblazoned
Upon that shattered flag of fiery cloud
Which leads the rear of the departing day;
Wan emblem of an empire fading now!
See how it trembles in the blood-red air,
And like a mighty lamp whose oil is spent
Shrinks on the horizon's edge, while, from above,
One star with insolent and victorious light
Hovers above its fall, and with keen beams,
Like arrows through a fainting antelope,
Strikes its weak form to death.

HASSAN:
Even as that moon
Renews itself —

MAHMUD:
Shall we be not renewed!
Far other bark than ours were needed now
To stem the torrent of descending time:
The Spirit that lifts the slave before his lord
Stalks through the capitals of armed kings,
And spreads his ensign in the wilderness:
Exults in chains; and, when the rebel falls,
Cries like the blood of Abel from the dust;
And the inheritors of the earth, like beasts
When earthquake is unleashed, with idiot fear
Cower in their kingly dens — as I do now.
What were Defeat when Victory must appal?
Or Danger, when Security looks pale? —
How said the messenger — who, from the fort
Islanded in the Danube, saw the battle
Of Bucharest? — that —

HASSAN:
Ibrahim's scimitar
Drew with its gleam swift victory from Heaven,
To burn before him in the night of battle —
A light and a destruction.

MAHMUD:
Ay! the day
Was ours: but how? —

HASSAN:
The light Wallachians,
The Arnaut, Servian, and Albanian allies
Fled from the glance of our artillery
Almost before the thunderstone alit.
One half the Grecian army made a bridge

Of safe and slow retreat, with Moslem dead;
The other —

MAHMUD:
Speak — tremble not. —

HASSAN:
Islanded
By victor myriads, formed in hollow square
With rough and steadfast front, and thrice flung back
The deluge of our foaming cavalry;
Thrice their keen wedge of battle pierced our lines.
Our baffled army trembled like one man
Before a host, and gave them space; but soon,
From the surrounding hills, the batteries blazed,
Kneading them down with fire and iron rain:
Yet none approached; till, like a field of corn
Under the hook of the swart sickleman,
The band, intrenched in mounds of Turkish dead,
Grew weak and few. — Then said the Pacha, 'Slaves,
Render yourselves — they have abandoned you —
What hope of refuge, or retreat, or aid?
We grant your lives.' 'Grant that which is thine own!'
Cried one, and fell upon his sword and died!
Another—'God, and man, and hope abandon me;
But I to them, and to myself, remain
Constant:' — he bowed his head, and his heart burst.
A third exclaimed, 'There is a refuge, tyrant,
Where thou darest not pursue, and canst not harm
Shouldst thou pursue; there we shall meet again.'
Then held his breath, and, after a brief spasm,
The indignant spirit cast its mortal garment
Among the slain — dead earth upon the earth!
So these survivors, each by different ways,
Some strange, all sudden, none dishonourable,
Met in triumphant death; and when our army
Closed in, while yet wonder, and awe, and shame

Held back the base hyaenas of the battle
That feed upon the dead and fly the living,
One rose out of the chaos of the slain:
And if it were a corpse which some dread spirit
Of the old saviours of the land we rule
Had lifted in its anger, wandering by; —
Or if there burned within the dying man
Unquenchable disdain of death, and faith
Creating what it feigned; — I cannot tell —
But he cried, ‘Phantoms of the free, we come!
Armies of the Eternal, ye who strike
To dust the citadels of sanguine kings,
And shake the souls throned on their stony hearts,
And thaw their frostwork diadems like dew; —
O ye who float around this clime, and weave
The garment of the glory which it wears,
Whose fame, though earth betray the dust it clasped,
Lies sepulchred in monumental thought; —
Progenitors of all that yet is great,
Ascribe to your bright senate, O accept
In your high ministrations, us, your sons —
Us first, and the more glorious yet to come!
And ye, weak conquerors! giants who look pale
When the crushed worm rebels beneath your tread,
The vultures and the dogs, your pensioners tame,
Are overgorged; but, like oppressors, still
They crave the relic of Destruction’s feast.
The exhalations and the thirsty winds
Are sick with blood; the dew is foul with death;
Heaven’s light is quenched in slaughter: thus, where’er
Upon your camps, cities, or towers, or fleets,
The obscene birds the reeking remnants cast
Of these dead limbs, — upon your streams and mountains,
Upon your fields, your gardens, and your housetops,
Where’er the winds shall creep, or the clouds fly,
Or the dews fall, or the angry sun look down
With poisoned light — Famine, and Pestilence,

And Panic, shall wage war upon our side!
Nature from all her boundaries is moved
Against ye: Time has found ye light as foam.
The Earth rebels; and Good and Evil stake
Their empire o'er the unborn world of men
On this one cast; — but ere the die be thrown,
The renovated genius of our race,
Proud umpire of the impious game, descends,
A seraph-winged Victory, bestriding
The tempest of the Omnipotence of God,
Which sweeps all things to their appointed doom,
And you to oblivion!' — More he would have said,
But —

MAHMUD:
Died — as thou shouldst ore thy lips had painted
Their ruin in the hues of our success.
A rebel's crime, gilt with a rebel's tongue!
Your heart is Greek, Hassan.

HASSAN:
It may be so:
A spirit not my own wrenched me within,
And I have spoken words I fear and hate;
Yet would I die for —

MAHMUD:
Live! oh live! outlive
Me and this sinking empire. But the fleet —

HASSAN:
Alas! —

MAHMUD:
The fleet which, like a flock of clouds
Chased by the wind, flies the insurgent banner!
Our winged castles from their merchant ships!
Our myriads before their weak pirate bands!

Our arms before their chains! our years of empire
Before their centuries of servile fear!
Death is awake! Repulse is on the waters!
They own no more the thunder-bearing banner
Of Mahmud; but, like hounds of a base breed,
Gorge from a stranger's hand, and rend their master.

HASSAN:
Latmos, and Ampelos, and Phanae saw
The wreck —

MAHMUD:
The caves of the Icarian isles
Told each to the other in loud mockery,
And with the tongue as of a thousand echoes,
First of the sea-convulsing fight — and, then, —
Thou darest to speak — senseless are the mountains:
Interpret thou their voice!

HASSAN:
My presence bore
A part in that day's shame. The Grecian fleet
Bore down at daybreak from the North, and hung
As multitudinous on the ocean line,
As cranes upon the cloudless Thracian wind.
Our squadron, convoying ten thousand men,
Was stretching towards Nauplia when the battle
Was kindled. —
First through the hail of our artillery
The agile Hydriote barks with press of sail
Dashed: — ship to ship, cannon to cannon, man
To man were grappled in the embrace of war,
Inextricable but by death or victory.
The tempest of the raging fight convulsed
To its crystalline depths that stainless sea,
And shook Heaven's roof of golden morning clouds,
Poised on an hundred azure mountain-isles.

In the brief trances of the artillery
One cry from the destroyed and the destroyer
Rose, and a cloud of desolation wrapped
The unforeseen event, till the north wind
Sprung from the sea, lifting the heavy veil
Of battle-smoke — then victory — victory!
For, as we thought, three frigates from Algiers
Bore down from Naxos to our aid, but soon
The abhorred cross glimmered behind, before,
Among, around us; and that fatal sign
Dried with its beams the strength in Moslem hearts,
As the sun drinks the dew. — What more? We fled! —
Our noonday path over the sanguine foam
Was beaconed, — and the glare struck the sun pale, —
By our consuming transports: the fierce light
Made all the shadows of our sails blood-red,
And every countenance blank. Some ships lay feeding
The ravening fire, even to the water's level;
Some were blown up; some, settling heavily,
Sunk; and the shrieks of our companions died
Upon the wind, that bore us fast and far,
Even after they were dead. Nine thousand perished!
We met the vultures legioned in the air
Stemming the torrent of the tainted wind;
They, screaming from their cloudy mountain-peaks,
Stooped through the sulphurous battle-smoke and perched
Each on the weltering carcase that we loved,
Like its ill angel or its damned soul,
Riding upon the bosom of the sea.
We saw the dog-fish hastening to their feast.
Joy waked the voiceless people of the sea,
And ravening Famine left his ocean cave
To dwell with War, with us, and with Despair.
We met night three hours to the west of Patmos,
And with night, tempest —

MAHMUD:
Cease!
[ENTER A MESSENGER.]

MESSENGER:
Your Sublime Highness,
That Christian hound, the Muscovite Ambassador,
Has left the city. — If the rebel fleet
Had anchored in the port, had victory
Crowned the Greek legions in the Hippodrome,
Panic were tamer. — Obedience and Mutiny,
Like giants in contention planet-struck,
Stand gazing on each other. — There is peace
In Stamboul. —

MAHMUD:
Is the grave not calmer still?
Its ruins shall be mine.

HASSAN:
Fear not the Russian:
The tiger leagues not with the stag at bay
Against the hunter. — Cunning, base, and cruel,
He crouches, watching till the spoil be won,
And must be paid for his reserve in blood.
After the war is fought, yield the sleek Russian
That which thou canst not keep, his deserved portion
Of blood, which shall not flow through streets and fields,
Rivers and seas, like that which we may win,
But stagnate in the veins of Christian slaves!
[ENTER SECOND MESSENGER.]

SECOND MESSENGER:
Nauplia, Tripolizza, Mothon, Athens,
Navarin, Artas, Monembasia,
Corinth, and Thebes are carried by assault,
And every Islamite who made his dogs
Fat with the flesh of Galilean slaves

Passed at the edge of the sword: the lust of blood,
Which made our warriors drunk, is quenched in death;
But like a fiery plague breaks out anew
In deeds which make the Christian cause look pale
In its own light. The garrison of Patras
Has store but for ten days, nor is there hope
But from the Briton: at once slave and tyrant,
His wishes still are weaker than his fears,
Or he would sell what faith may yet remain
From the oaths broke in Genoa and in Norway;
And if you buy him not, your treasury
Is empty even of promises — his own coin.
The freedman of a western poet-chief
Holds Attica with seven thousand rebels,
And has beat back the Pacha of Negropont:
The aged Ali sits in Yanina
A crownless metaphor of empire:
His name, that shadow of his withered might,
Holds our besieging army like a spell
In prey to famine, pest, and mutiny;
He, bastioned in his citadel, looks forth
Joyless upon the sapphire lake that mirrors
The ruins of the city where he reigned
Childless and sceptreless. The Greek has reaped
The costly harvest his own blood matured,
Not the sower, Ali — who has bought a truce
From Ypsilanti with ten camel-loads
Of Indian gold.

[ENTER A THIRD MESSENGER.]

MAHMUD:
What more?

THIRD MESSENGER:
The Christian tribes
Of Lebanon and the Syrian wilderness

Are in revolt; — Damascus, Hems, Aleppo
Tremble; — the Arab menaces Medina,
The Aethiop has intrenched himself in Sennaar,
And keeps the Egyptian rebel well employed,
Who denies homage, claims investiture
As price of tardy aid. Persia demands
The cities on the Tigris, and the Georgians
Refuse their living tribute. Crete and Cyprus,
Like mountain-twins that from each other's veins
Catch the volcano-fire and earthquake-spasm,
Shake in the general fever. Through the city,
Like birds before a storm, the Santons shriek,
And prophesyings horrible and new
Are heard among the crowd: that sea of men
Sleeps on the wrecks it made, breathless and still.
A Dervise, learned in the Koran, preaches
That it is written how the sins of Islam
Must raise up a destroyer even now.
The Greeks expect a Saviour from the West,
Who shall not come, men say, in clouds and glory,
But in the omnipresence of that Spirit
In which all live and are. Ominous signs
Are blazoned broadly on the noonday sky:
One saw a red cross stamped upon the sun;
It has rained blood; and monstrous births declare
The secret wrath of Nature and her Lord.
The army encamped upon the Cydaris
Was roused last night by the alarm of battle,
And saw two hosts conflicting in the air,
The shadows doubtless of the unborn time
Cast on the mirror of the night. While yet
The fight hung balanced, there arose a storm
Which swept the phantoms from among the stars.
At the third watch the Spirit of the Plague
Was heard abroad flapping among the tents;
Those who relieved watch found the sentinels dead.
The last news from the camp is, that a thousand

Have sickened, and —
[ENTER A FOURTH MESSENGER.]

MAHMUD:
And thou, pale ghost, dim shadow
Of some untimely rumour, speak!

FOURTH MESSENGER:
One comes
Fainting with toil, covered with foam and blood:
He stood, he says, on Chelonites'
Promontory, which o'erlooks the isles that groan
Under the Briton's frown, and all their waters
Then trembling in the splendour of the moon,
When as the wandering clouds unveiled or hid
Her boundless light, he saw two adverse fleets
Stalk through the night in the horizon's glimmer,
Mingling fierce thunders and sulphureous gleams,
And smoke which strangled every infant wind
That soothed the silver clouds through the deep air.
At length the battle slept, but the Sirocco
Awoke, and drove his flock of thunder-clouds
Over the sea-horizon, blotting out
All objects — save that in the faint moon-glimpse
He saw, or dreamed he saw, the Turkish admiral
And two the loftiest of our ships of war,
With the bright image of that Queen of Heaven,
Who hid, perhaps, her face for grief, reversed;
And the abhorred cross —

620 on Chelonites']on Chelonites "Errata";
upon Clelonite's edition 1822;
upon Clelonit's editions 1839.
[ENTER AN ATTENDANT.]

ATTENDANT:
Your Sublime Highness,
The Jew, who —

MAHMUD:
Could not come more seasonably:
Bid him attend. I'll hear no more! too long
We gaze on danger through the mist of fear,
And multiply upon our shattered hopes
The images of ruin. Come what will!
To-morrow and to-morrow are as lamps
Set in our path to light us to the edge
Through rough and smooth, nor can we suffer aught
Which He inflicts not in whose hand we are.
[EXEUNT.]

SEMICHORUS 1:
Would I were the winged cloud
Of a tempest swift and loud!
I would scorn
The smile of morn
And the wave where the moonrise is born!
I would leave
The spirits of eve
A shroud for the corpse of the day to weave
From other threads than mine!
Bask in the deep blue noon divine.
Who would? Not I.

SEMICHORUS 2:
Whither to fly?

SEMICHORUS 1:
Where the rocks that gird th' Aegean
Echo to the battle paean
Of the free —
I would flee
A tempestuous herald of victory!
My golden rain
For the Grecian slain
Should mingle in tears with the bloody main,

And my solemn thunder-knell
Should ring to the world the passing-bell
Of Tyranny!

SEMICHORUS 2:
Ah king! wilt thou chain
The rack and the rain?
Wilt thou fetter the lightning and hurricane?
The storms are free,
But we —

CHORUS:
O Slavery! thou frost of the world's prime,
Killing its flowers and leaving its thorns bare!
Thy touch has stamped these limbs with crime,
These brows thy branding garland bear,
But the free heart, the impassive soul
Scorn thy control!

SEMICHORUS 1:
Let there be light! said Liberty,
And like sunrise from the sea,
Athens arose! — Around her born,
Shone like mountains in the morn
Glorious states; — and are they now
Ashes, wrecks, oblivion?

SEMICHORUS 2:
Go,
Where Thermae and Asopus swallowed
Persia, as the sand does foam:
Deluge upon deluge followed,
Discord, Macedon, and Rome:
And lastly thou!

SEMICHORUS 1:
Temples and towers,
Citadels and marts, and they

Who live and die there, have been ours,
And may be thine, and must decay;
But Greece and her foundations are
Built below the tide of war,
Based on the crystalline sea
Of thought and its eternity;
Her citizens, imperial spirits,
Rule the present from the past,
On all this world of men inherits
Their seal is set.

SEMICHORUS 2:
Hear ye the blast,
Whose Orphic thunder thrilling calls
From ruin her Titanian walls?
Whose spirit shakes the sapless bones
Of Slavery? Argos, Corinth, Crete
Hear, and from their mountain thrones
The daemons and the nymphs repeat
The harmony.

SEMICHORUS 1:
I hear! I hear!

SEMICHORUS 2:
The world's eyeless charioteer,
Destiny, is hurrying by!
What faith is crushed, what empire bleeds
Beneath her earthquake-footed steeds?
What eagle-winged victory sits
At her right hand? what shadow flits
Before? what splendour rolls behind?
Ruin and renovation cry
'Who but We?'

SEMICHORUS 1:
I hear! I hear!
The hiss as of a rushing wind,

The roar as of an ocean foaming,
The thunder as of earthquake coming.
I hear! I hear!
The crash as of an empire falling,
The shrieks as of a people calling
‘Mercy! mercy!’ — How they thrill!
Then a shout of ‘kill! kill! kill!’
And then a small still voice, thus —

SEMICHORUS 2:
For
Revenge and Wrong bring forth their kind,
The foul cubs like their parents are,
Their den is in the guilty mind,
And Conscience feeds them with despair.

SEMICHORUS 1:
In sacred Athens, near the fane
Of Wisdom, Pity’s altar stood:
Serve not the unknown God in vain.
But pay that broken shrine again,
Love for hate and tears for blood.
[ENTER MAHMUD AND AHASUERUS.]

MAHMUD:
Thou art a man, thou sayest, even as we.

AHASUERUS:
No more!

MAHMUD:
But raised above thy fellow-men
By thought, as I by power.

AHASUERUS:
Thou sayest so.

MAHMUD:
Thou art an adept in the difficult lore
Of Greek and Frank philosophy; thou numberest
The flowers, and thou measurest the stars;
Thou severest element from element;
Thy spirit is present in the Past, and sees
The birth of this old world through all its cycles
Of desolation and of loveliness,
And when man was not, and how man became
The monarch and the slave of this low sphere,
And all its narrow circles — it is much —
I honour thee, and would be what thou art
Were I not what I am; but the unborn hour,
Cradled in fear and hope, conflicting storms,
Who shall unveil? Nor thou, nor I, nor any
Mighty or wise. I apprehended not
What thou hast taught me, but I now perceive
That thou art no interpreter of dreams;
Thou dost not own that art, device, or God,
Can make the Future present — let it come!
Moreover thou disdainest us and ours;
Thou art as God, whom thou contemplatest.

AHASUERUS:
Disdain thee? — not the worm beneath thy feet!
The Fathomless has care for meaner things
Than thou canst dream, and has made pride for those
Who would be what they may not, or would seem
That which they are not. Sultan! talk no more
Of thee and me, the Future and the Past;
But look on that which cannot change — the One,
The unborn and the undying. Earth and ocean,
Space, and the isles of life or light that gem
The sapphire floods of interstellar air,
This firmament pavilioned upon chaos,
With all its cressets of immortal fire,
Whose outwall, bastioned impregnably

Against the escape of boldest thoughts, repels them
As Calpe the Atlantic clouds — this Whole
Of suns, and worlds, and men, and beasts, and flowers,
With all the silent or tempestuous workings
By which they have been, are, or cease to be,
Is but a vision; — all that it inherits
Are motes of a sick eye, bubbles and dreams;
Thought is its cradle and its grave, nor less
The Future and the Past are idle shadows
Of thought's eternal flight — they have no being:
Nought is but that which feels itself to be.

MAHMUD:
What meanest thou? Thy words stream like a tempest
Of dazzling mist within my brain — they shake
The earth on which I stand, and hang like night
On Heaven above me. What can they avail?
They cast on all things surest, brightest, best,
Doubt, insecurity, astonishment.

AHASUERUS:
Mistake me not! All is contained in each.
Dodona's forest to an acorn's cup
Is that which has been, or will be, to that
Which is — the absent to the present. Thought
Alone, and its quick elements, Will, Passion,
Reason, Imagination, cannot die;
They are, what that which they regard appears,
The stuff whence mutability can weave
All that it hath dominion o'er, worlds, worms,
Empires, and superstitions. What has thought
To do with time, or place, or circumstance?
Wouldst thou behold the Future? — ask and have!
Knock and it shall be opened — look, and lo!
The coming age is shadowed on the Past
As on a glass.

MAHMUD:
Wild, wilder thoughts convulse
My spirit — Did not Mahomet the Second
Win Stamboul?

AHASUERUS:
Thou wouldst ask that giant spirit
The written fortunes of thy house and faith.
Thou wouldst cite one out of the grave to tell
How what was born in blood must die.

MAHMUD:
Thy words
Have power on me! I see —

AHASUERUS:
What hearest thou?

MAHMUD:
A far whisper —
Terrible silence.

AHASUERUS:
What succeeds?

MAHMUD:
The sound
As of the assault of an imperial city,
The hiss of inextinguishable fire,
The roar of giant cannon; the earthquaking
Fall of vast bastions and precipitous towers,
The shock of crags shot from strange enginery,
The clash of wheels, and clang of armed hoofs,
And crash of brazen mail as of the wreck
Of adamantine mountains — the mad blast
Of trumpets, and the neigh of raging steeds,
The shrieks of women whose thrill jars the blood,
And one sweet laugh, most horrible to hear,

As of a joyous infant waked and playing
With its dead mother's breast, and now more loud
The mingled battle-cry, — ha! hear I not
'En touto nike!' 'Allah-illa-Allah!'?

AHASUERUS:
The sulphurous mist is raised — thou seest —

MAHMUD:
A chasm,
As of two mountains in the wall of Stamboul;
And in that ghastly breach the Islamites,
Like giants on the ruins of a world,
Stand in the light of sunrise. In the dust
Glimmers a kingless diadem, and one
Of regal port has cast himself beneath
The stream of war. Another proudly clad
In golden arms spurs a Tartarian barb
Into the gap, and with his iron mace
Directs the torrent of that tide of men,
And seems — he is — Mahomet!

AHASUERUS:
What thou seest
Is but the ghost of thy forgotten dream.
A dream itself, yet less, perhaps, than that
Thou call'st reality. Thou mayst behold
How cities, on which Empire sleeps enthroned,
Bow their towered crests to mutability.
Poised by the flood, e'en on the height thou holdest,
Thou mayst now learn how the full tide of power
Ebbs to its depths. — Inheritor of glory,
Conceived in darkness, born in blood, and nourished
With tears and toil, thou seest the mortal throes
Of that whose birth was but the same. The Past
Now stands before thee like an Incarnation
Of the To-come; yet wouldst thou commune with

That portion of thyself which was ere thou
Didst start for this brief race whose crown is death,
Dissolve with that strong faith and fervent passion
Which called it from the uncreated deep,
Yon cloud of war, with its tempestuous phantoms
Of raging death; and draw with mighty will
The imperial shade hither.
[EXIT AHASUERUS.]
[THE PHANTOM OF MAHOMET THE SECOND APPEARS.]

MAHMUD:
Approach!

PHANTOM:
I come
Thence whither thou must go! The grave is fitter
To take the living than give up the dead;
Yet has thy faith prevailed, and I am here.
The heavy fragments of the power which fell
When I arose, like shapeless crags and clouds,
Hang round my throne on the abyss, and voices
Of strange lament soothe my supreme repose,
Wailing for glory never to return. —
A later Empire nods in its decay:
The autumn of a greener faith is come,
And wolfish change, like winter, howls to strip
The foliage in which Fame, the eagle, built
Her aerie, while Dominion whelped below.
The storm is in its branches, and the frost
Is on its leaves, and the blank deep expects
Oblivion on oblivion, spoil on spoil,
Ruin on ruin: — Thou art slow, my son;
The Anarchs of the world of darkness keep
A throne for thee, round which thine empire lies
Boundless and mute; and for thy subjects thou,
Like us, shalt rule the ghosts of murdered life,
The phantoms of the powers who rule thee now —

Mutinous passions, and conflicting fears,
And hopes that sate themselves on dust, and die! —
Stripped of their mortal strength, as thou of thine.
Islam must fall, but we will reign together
Over its ruins in the world of death: —
And if the trunk be dry, yet shall the seed
Unfold itself even in the shape of that
Which gathers birth in its decay. Woe! woe!
To the weak people tangled in the grasp
Of its last spasms.

MAHMUD:
Spirit, woe to all!
Woe to the wronged and the avenger! Woe
To the destroyer, woe to the destroyed!
Woe to the dupe, and woe to the deceiver!
Woe to the oppressed, and woe to the oppressor!
Woe both to those that suffer and inflict;
Those who are born and those who die! but say,
Imperial shadow of the thing I am,
When, how, by whom, Destruction must accomplish
Her consummation!

PHANTOM:
Ask the cold pale Hour,
Rich in reversion of impending death,
When HE shall fall upon whose ripe gray hairs
Sit Care, and Sorrow, and Infirmity —
The weight which Crime, whose wings are plumed with years,
Leaves in his flight from ravaged heart to heart
Over the heads of men, under which burthen
They bow themselves unto the grave: fond wretch!
He leans upon his crutch, and talks of years
To come, and how in hours of youth renewed
He will renew lost joys, and —

VOICE WITHOUT:
Victory! Victory!
[THE PHANTOM VANISHES.]

MAHMUD:
What sound of the importunate earth has broken
My mighty trance?

VOICE WITHOUT:
Victory! Victory!

MAHMUD:
Weak lightning before darkness! poor faint smile
Of dying Islam! Voice which art the response
Of hollow weakness! Do I wake and live?
Were there such things, or may the unquiet brain,
Vexed by the wise mad talk of the old Jew,
Have shaped itself these shadows of its fear?
It matters not! — for nought we see or dream,
Possess, or lose, or grasp at, can be worth
More than it gives or teaches. Come what may,
The Future must become the Past, and I
As they were to whom once this present hour,
This gloomy crag of time to which I cling,
Seemed an Elysian isle of peace and joy
Never to be attained. — I must rebuke
This drunkenness of triumph ere it die,
And dying, bring despair. Victory! poor slaves!
[EXIT MAHMUD.]

VOICE WITHOUT:
Shout in the jubilee of death! The Greeks
Are as a brood of lions in the net
Round which the kingly hunters of the earth
Stand smiling. Anarchs, ye whose daily food
Are curses, groans, and gold, the fruit of death,
From Thule to the girdle of the world,
Come, feast! the board groans with the flesh of men;

The cup is foaming with a nation's blood,
Famine and Thirst await! eat, drink, and die!

SEMICHORUS 1:
Victorious Wrong, with vulture scream,
Salutes the rising sun, pursues the flying day!
I saw her, ghastly as a tyrant's dream,
Perch on the trembling pyramid of night,
Beneath which earth and all her realms pavilioned lay
In visions of the dawning undelight.
Who shall impede her flight?
Who rob her of her prey?

VOICE WITHOUT:
Victory! Victory! Russia's famished eagles
Dare not to prey beneath the crescent's light.
Impale the remnant of the Greeks! despoil!
Violate! make their flesh cheaper than dust!

SEMICHORUS 2:
Thou voice which art
The herald of the ill in splendour hid!
Thou echo of the hollow heart
Of monarchy, bear me to thine abode
When desolation flashes o'er a world destroyed:
Oh, bear me to those isles of jagged cloud
Which float like mountains on the earthquake, mid
The momentary oceans of the lightning,
Or to some toppling promontory proud
Of solid tempest whose black pyramid,
Riven, overhangs the founts intensely bright'ning
Of those dawn-tinted deluges of fire
Before their waves expire,
When heaven and earth are light, and only light
In the thunder-night!

VOICE WITHOUT:
Victory! Victory! Austria, Russia, England,

And that tame serpent, that poor shadow, France,
Cry peace, and that means death when monarchs speak.
Ho, there! bring torches, sharpen those red stakes,
These chains are light, fitter for slaves and poisoners
Than Greeks. Kill! plunder! burn! let none remain.

SEMICHORUS 1:
Alas! for Liberty!
If numbers, wealth, or unfulfilling years,
Or fate, can quell the free!
Alas! for Virtue, when
Torments, or contumely, or the sneers
Of erring judging men
Can break the heart where it abides.
Alas! if Love, whose smile makes this obscure world splendid,
Can change with its false times and tides,
Like hope and terror, —
Alas for Love!
And Truth, who wanderest lone and unbefriended,
If thou canst veil thy lie-consuming mirror
Before the dazzled eyes of Error,
Alas for thee! Image of the Above.

SEMICHORUS 2:
Repulse, with plumes from conquest torn,
Led the ten thousand from the limits of the morn
Through many an hostile Anarchy!
At length they wept aloud, and cried, ‘The Sea! the Sea!’
Through exile, persecution, and despair,
Rome was, and young Atlantis shall become
The wonder, or the terror, or the tomb
Of all whose step wakes Power lulled in her savage lair:
But Greece was as a hermit-child,
Whose fairest thoughts and limbs were built
To woman’s growth, by dreams so mild,
She knew not pain or guilt;
And now, O Victory, blush! and Empire, tremble

When ye desert the free —
If Greece must be
A wreck, yet shall its fragments reassemble,
And build themselves again impregnably
In a diviner clime,
To Amphionic music on some Cape sublime,
Which frowns above the idle foam of Time.

SEMICHORUS 1:
Let the tyrants rule the desert they have made;
Let the free possess the Paradise they claim;
Be the fortune of our fierce oppressors weighed
With our ruin, our resistance, and our name!

SEMICHORUS 2:
Our dead shall be the seed of their decay,
Our survivors be the shadow of their pride,
Our adversity a dream to pass away —
Their dishonour a remembrance to abide!

VOICE WITHOUT:
Victory! Victory! The bought Briton sends
The keys of ocean to the Islamite. —
Now shall the blazon of the cross be veiled,
And British skill directing Othman might,
Thunder-strike rebel victory. Oh, keep holy
This jubilee of unrevenged blood!
Kill! crush! despoil! Let not a Greek escape!

SEMICHORUS 1:
Darkness has dawned in the East
On the noon of time:
The death-birds descend to their feast
From the hungry clime.
Let Freedom and Peace flee far
To a sunnier strand,
And follow Love's folding-star
To the Evening land!

SEMICHORUS 2:
The young moon has fed
Her exhausted horn
With the sunset's fire:
The weak day is dead,
But the night is not born;
And, like loveliness panting with wild desire
While it trembles with fear and delight,
Hesperus flies from awakening night,
And pants in its beauty and speed with light
Fast-flashing, soft, and bright.
Thou beacon of love! thou lamp of the free!
Guide us far, far away,
To climes where now veiled by the ardour of day
Thou art hidden
From waves on which weary Noon
Faints in her summer swoon,
Between kingless continents sinless as Eden,
Around mountains and islands inviolably
Pranked on the sapphire sea.

SEMICHORUS 1:
Through the sunset of hope,
Like the shapes of a dream.
What Paradise islands of glory gleam!
Beneath Heaven's cope,
Their shadows more clear float by —
The sound of their oceans, the light of their sky,
The music and fragrance their solitudes breathe
Burst, like morning on dream, or like Heaven on death,
Through the walls of our prison;
And Greece, which was dead, is arisen!

CHORUS:
The world's great age begins anew,
The golden years return,
The earth doth like a snake renew

Her winter weeds outworn:
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam,
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

A brighter Hellas rears its mountains
From waves serener far;
A new Peneus rolls his fountains
Against the morning star.
Where fairer Tempes bloom, there sleep
Young Cyclads on a sunnier deep.

A loftier Argo cleaves the main,
Fraught with a later prize;
Another Orpheus sings again,
And loves, and weeps, and dies.
A new Ulysses leaves once more
Calypso for his native shore.

Oh, write no more the tale of Troy,
If earth Death's scroll must be!
Nor mix with Laian rage the joy
Which dawns upon the free:
Although a subtler Sphinx renew
Riddles of death Thebes never knew.

Another Athens shall arise,
And to remoter time
Bequeath, like sunset to the skies,
The splendour of its prime;
And leave, if nought so bright may live,
All earth can take or Heaven can give.

Saturn and Love their long repose
Shall burst, more bright and good
Than all who fell, than One who rose,
Than many unsubdued:
Not gold, not blood, their altar dowers,
But votive tears and symbol flowers.

Oh, cease! must hate and death return?
Cease! must men kill and die?
Cease! drain not to its dregs the urn
Of bitter prophecy.
The world is weary of the past,
Oh, might it die or rest at last!

NOTES.

(1) THE QUENCHLESS ASHES OF MILAN [L. 60].

Milan was the centre of the resistance of the Lombard league against the Austrian tyrant. Frederic Barbarossa burnt the city to the ground, but liberty lived in its ashes, and it rose like an exhalation from its ruin. See Sismondi's "Histoire des Republiques Italiennes", a book which has done much towards awakening the Italians to an imitation of their great ancestors.

(2) THE CHORUS [L. 197].

The popular notions of Christianity are represented in this chorus as true in their relation to the worship they superseded, and that which in all probability they will supersede, without considering their merits in a relation more universal. The first stanza contrasts the immortality of the living and thinking beings which inhabit the planets, and to use a common and inadequate phrase, "clothe themselves in matter", with the transience of the noblest manifestations of the external world.

The concluding verses indicate a progressive state of more or loss exalted existence, according to the degree of perfection which every distinct intelligence may have attained. Let it not be supposed that I mean to dogmatise upon a subject, concerning which all men are equally ignorant, or that I think the Gordian knot of the origin of evil can be disentangled by that or any similar assertions. The received hypothesis of a Being resembling men in the moral attributes of His nature, having called us out of non-existence, and after inflicting on us the misery of the commission of error, should superadd that of the punishment and the privations consequent upon it, still would remain inexplicable and incredible. That there is a true solution of the riddle, and that in our present state that solution is unattainable by us, are propositions which may be regarded as equally certain: meanwhile, as it is the province of the poet to attach himself to those ideas which exalt and ennoble humanity, let him be permitted to have conjectured the condition of that futurity towards which we are all impelled by an inextinguishable thirst for immortality. Until better arguments can be produced than sophisms which disgrace the cause, this desire itself must remain the strongest and the only presumption that eternity is the

inheritance of every thinking being.
(3) NO HOARY PRIESTS AFTER THAT PATRIARCH [L. 245].

The Greek Patriarch, after haying been compelled to fulminate an anathema against the insurgents, was put to death by the Turks.

Fortunately the Greeks have been taught that they cannot buy security by degradation, and the Turks, though equally cruel, are less cunning than the smooth-faced tyrants of Europe. As to the anathema, his Holiness might as well have thrown his mitre at Mount Athos for any effect that it produced. The chiefs of the Greeks are almost all men of comprehension and enlightened views on religion and politics.
(4) THE FREEDMAN OF A WESTERN POET-CHIEF [L. 563].

A Greek who had been Lord Byron's servant commands the insurgents in Attica. This Greek, Lord Byron informs me, though a poet and an enthusiastic patriot, gave him rather the idea of a timid and unenterprising person. It appears that circumstances make men what they are, and that we all contain the germ of a degree of degradation or of greatness whose connection with our character is determined by events.
(5) THE GREEKS EXPECT A SAVIOUR FROM THE WEST [L. 598].

It is reported that this Messiah had arrived at a seaport near Lacedaemon in an American brig. The association of names and ideas is irresistibly ludicrous, but the prevalence of such a rumour strongly marks the state of popular enthusiasm in Greece.
(6) THE SOUND AS OF THE ASSAULT OF AN IMPERIAL CITY [LL. 814-15].

For the vision of Mahmud of the taking of Constantinople in 1453, see Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire", volume 12 page 223.

The manner of the invocation of the spirit of Mahomet the Second will be censured as over subtle. I could easily have made the Jew a regular conjuror, and the Phantom an ordinary ghost. I have preferred to represent the Jew as disclaiming all pretension, or even belief, in supernatural agency, and as tempting Mahmud to that state of mind in which ideas may be supposed to assume the force of sensations through the confusion of

thought with the objects of thought, and the excess of passion animating the creations of imagination.

It is a sort of natural magic, susceptible of being exercised in a degree by any one who should have made himself master of the secret associations of another's thoughts.

(7) THE CHORUS [L. 1060].

The final chorus is indistinct and obscure, as the event of the living drama whose arrival it foretells. Prophecies of wars, and rumours of wars, etc., may safely be made by poet or prophet in any age, but to anticipate however darkly a period of regeneration and happiness is a more hazardous exercise of the faculty which bards possess or feign. It will remind the reader 'magno NEC proximus intervallo' of Isaiah and Virgil, whose ardent spirits overleaping the actual reign of evil which we endure and bewail, already saw the possible and perhaps approaching state of society in which the 'lion shall lie down with the lamb,' and 'omnis feret omnia tellus.' Let these great names be my authority and my excuse.

(8) SATURN AND LOVE THEIR LONG REPOSE SHALL BURST [L. 1090].

Saturn and Love were among the deities of a real or imaginary state of innocence and happiness. ALL those WHO FELL, or the Gods of Greece, Asia, and Egypt; the ONE WHO ROSE, or Jesus Christ, at whose appearance the idols of the Pagan World wore amerced of their worship; and the MANY UNSUBDUED, or the monstrous objects of the idolatry of China, India, the Antarctic islands, and the native tribes of America, certainly have reigned over the understandings of men in conjunction or in succession, during periods in which all we know of evil has been in a state of portentous, and, until the revival of learning and the arts, perpetually increasing, activity. The Grecian gods seem indeed to have been personally more innocent, although it cannot be said, that as far as temperance and chastity are concerned, they gave so edifying an example as their successor. The sublime human character of Jesus Christ was deformed by an imputed identification with a Power, who tempted, betrayed, and punished the innocent beings who were called into existence by His sole will; and for the period of a thousand years, the spirit of this most just, wise, and benevolent

of men has been propitiated with myriads of hecatombs of those who approached the nearest to His innocence and wisdom, sacrificed under every aggravation of atrocity and variety of torture. The horrors of the Mexican, the Peruvian, and the Indian superstitions are well known.

FRAGMENTS OF AN UNFINISHED DRAMA

Published in part (lines 1-69, 100-120) by Mrs. Shelley, “Posthumous Poems”, 1824; and again, with the notes, in “Poetical Works”, 1839. Lines 127-238 were printed by Dr. Garnett under the title of “The Magic Plant” in his “Relics of Shelley”, 1862. The whole was edited in its present form from the Boscombe manuscript by Mr. W.M. Rossetti in 1870 (“Complete Poetical Works of P. B. S.”, Moxon, 2 volumes.). ‘Written at Pisa during the late winter or early spring of 1822’ (Garnett).

The following fragments are part of a Drama undertaken for the amusement of the individuals who composed our intimate society, but left unfinished. I have preserved a sketch of the story as far as it had been shadowed in the poet’s mind.

An Enchantress, living in one of the islands of the Indian Archipelago, saves the life of a Pirate, a man of savage but noble nature. She becomes enamoured of him; and he, inconstant to his mortal love, for a while returns her passion; but at length, recalling the memory of her whom he left, and who laments his loss, he escapes from the Enchanted Island, and returns to his lady. His mode of life makes him again go to sea, and the Enchantress seizes the opportunity to bring him, by a spirit-brewed tempest, back to her Island. — [MRS. SHELLEY’S NOTE, 1839.]

SCENE. — BEFORE THE CAVERN OF THE INDIAN ENCHANTRESS. THE ENCHANTRESS COMES FORTH.

ENCHANTRESS:
He came like a dream in the dawn of life,
He fled like a shadow before its noon;
He is gone, and my peace is turned to strife,
And I wander and wane like the weary moon.
O, sweet Echo, wake,
And for my sake
Make answer the while my heart shall break!

But my heart has a music which Echo's lips,
Though tender and true, yet can answer not,
And the shadow that moves in the soul's eclipse
Can return not the kiss by his now forgot;
Sweet lips! he who hath
On my desolate path
Cast the darkness of absence, worse than death!

[THE ENCHANTRESS MAKES HER SPELL: SHE IS ANSWERED BY A SPIRIT.]

SPIRIT:
Within the silent centre of the earth
My mansion is; where I have lived insphered
From the beginning, and around my sleep
Have woven all the wondrous imagery
Of this dim spot, which mortals call the world;
Infinite depths of unknown elements
Massed into one impenetrable mask;
Sheets of immeasurable fire, and veins
Of gold and stone, and adamantine iron.
And as a veil in which I walk through Heaven
I have wrought mountains, seas, and waves, and clouds,
And lastly light, whose interfusion dawns
In the dark space of interstellar air.

[A good Spirit, who watches over the Pirate's fate, leads, in a mysterious manner, the lady of his love to the Enchanted Isle. She is accompanied by a Youth, who loves the lady, but whose passion she returns only with a sisterly affection. The ensuing scene takes place between them on their arrival at the Isle. [MRS. SHELLEY'S NOTE, 1839.]]

ANOTHER SCENE.

INDIAN YOUTH AND LADY.

INDIAN:
And, if my grief should still be dearer to me
Than all the pleasures in the world beside,
Why would you lighten it? —

LADY:
I offer only
That which I seek, some human sympathy
In this mysterious island.

INDIAN:
Oh! my friend,
My sister, my beloved! — What do I say?
My brain is dizzy, and I scarce know whether
I speak to thee or her.

LADY:
Peace, perturbed heart!
I am to thee only as thou to mine,
The passing wind which heals the brow at noon,
And may strike cold into the breast at night,
Yet cannot linger where it soothes the most,
Or long soothe could it linger.

INDIAN:
But you said
You also loved?

LADY:
Loved! Oh, I love. Methinks

This word of love is fit for all the world,
And that for gentle hearts another name
Would speak of gentler thoughts than the world owns.
I have loved.

INDIAN:
And thou lovest not? if so,
Young as thou art thou canst afford to weep.

LADY:
Oh! would that I could claim exemption
From all the bitterness of that sweet name.
I loved, I love, and when I love no more
Let joys and grief perish, and leave despair
To ring the knell of youth. He stood beside me,
The embodied vision of the brightest dream,
Which like a dawn heralds the day of life;
The shadow of his presence made my world
A Paradise. All familiar things he touched,
All common words he spoke, became to me
Like forms and sounds of a diviner world.
He was as is the sun in his fierce youth,
As terrible and lovely as a tempest;
He came, and went, and left me what I am.
Alas! Why must I think how oft we two
Have sate together near the river springs,
Under the green pavilion which the willow
Spreads on the floor of the unbroken fountain,
Strewn, by the nurslings that linger there,
Over that islet paved with flowers and moss,
While the musk-rose leaves, like flakes of crimson snow,
Showered on us, and the dove mourned in the pine,
Sad prophetess of sorrows not her own?
The crane returned to her unfrozen haunt,
And the false cuckoo bade the spray good morn;
And on a wintry bough the widowed bird,
Hid in the deepest night of ivy-leaves,

Renewed the vigils of a sleepless sorrow.
I, left like her, and leaving one like her,
Alike abandoned and abandoning
(Oh! unlike her in this!) the gentlest youth,
Whose love had made my sorrows dear to him,
Even as my sorrow made his love to me!

INDIAN:
One curse of Nature stamps in the same mould
The features of the wretched; and they are
As like as violet to violet,
When memory, the ghost, their odours keeps
Mid the cold relics of abandoned joy. —
Proceed.

LADY:
He was a simple innocent boy.
I loved him well, but not as he desired;
Yet even thus he was content to be: —
A short content, for I was —

INDIAN [ASIDE]:
God of Heaven!
From such an islet, such a river-spring — !
I dare not ask her if there stood upon it
A pleasure-dome surmounted by a crescent,
With steps to the blue water.
[ALOUD.]
It may be
That Nature masks in life several copies
Of the same lot, so that the sufferers
May feel another's sorrow as their own,
And find in friendship what they lost in love.
That cannot be: yet it is strange that we,
From the same scene, by the same path to this
Realm of abandonment — But speak! your breath —
Your breath is like soft music, your words are

The echoes of a voice which on my heart
Sleeps like a melody of early days.
But as you said —

LADY:
He was so awful, yet
So beautiful in mystery and terror,
Calming me as the loveliness of heaven
Soothes the unquiet sea: — and yet not so,
For he seemed stormy, and would often seem
A quenchless sun masked in portentous clouds;
For such his thoughts, and even his actions were;
But he was not of them, nor they of him,
But as they hid his splendour from the earth.
Some said he was a man of blood and peril,
And steeped in bitter infamy to the lips.
More need was there I should be innocent,
More need that I should be most true and kind,
And much more need that there should be found one
To share remorse and scorn and solitude,
And all the ills that wait on those who do
The tasks of ruin in the world of life.
He fled, and I have followed him.

INDIAN:
Such a one
Is he who was the winter of my peace.
But, fairest stranger, when didst thou depart
From the far hills where rise the springs of India?
How didst thou pass the intervening sea?

LADY:
If I be sure I am not dreaming now,
I should not doubt to say it was a dream.
Methought a star came down from heaven,
And rested mid the plants of India,
Which I had given a shelter from the frost

Within my chamber. There the meteor lay,
Panting forth light among the leaves and flowers,
As if it lived, and was outworn with speed;
Or that it loved, and passion made the pulse
Of its bright life throb like an anxious heart,
Till it diffused itself; and all the chamber
And walls seemed melted into emerald fire
That burned not; in the midst of which appeared
A spirit like a child, and laughed aloud
A thrilling peal of such sweet merriment
As made the blood tingle in my warm feet:
Then bent over a vase, and murmuring
Low, unintelligible melodies,
Placed something in the mould like melon-seeds,
And slowly faded, and in place of it
A soft hand issued from the veil of fire,
Holding a cup like a magnolia flower,
And poured upon the earth within the vase
The element with which it overflowed,
Brighter than morning light, and purer than
The water of the springs of Himalah.

INDIAN:
You waked not?

LADY:
Not until my dream became
Like a child's legend on the tideless sand.
Which the first foam erases half, and half
Leaves legible. At length I rose, and went,
Visiting my flowers from pot to pot, and thought
To set new cuttings in the empty urns,
And when I came to that beside the lattice,
I saw two little dark-green leaves
Lifting the light mould at their birth, and then
I half-remembered my forgotten dream.
And day by day, green as a gourd in June,

The plant grew fresh and thick, yet no one knew
What plant it was; its stem and tendrils seemed
Like emerald snakes, mottled and diamonded
With azure mail and streaks of woven silver;
And all the sheaths that folded the dark buds
Rose like the crest of cobra-di-capel,
Until the golden eye of the bright flower,
Through the dark lashes of those veined lids,
…disencumbered of their silent sleep,
Gazed like a star into the morning light.
Its leaves were delicate, you almost saw
The pulses
With which the purple velvet flower was fed
To overflow, and like a poet's heart
Changing bright fancy to sweet sentiment,
Changed half the light to fragrance. It soon fell,
And to a green and dewy embryo-fruit
Left all its treasured beauty. Day by day
I nursed the plant, and on the double flute
Played to it on the sunny winter days
Soft melodies, as sweet as April rain
On silent leaves, and sang those words in which
Passion makes Echo taunt the sleeping strings;
And I would send tales of forgotten love
Late into the lone night, and sing wild songs
Of maids deserted in the olden time,
And weep like a soft cloud in April's bosom
Upon the sleeping eyelids of the plant,
So that perhaps it dreamed that Spring was come,
And crept abroad into the moonlight air,
And loosened all its limbs, as, noon by noon,
The sun averted less his oblique beam.

INDIAN:
And the plant died not in the frost?

LADY:
It grew;
And went out of the lattice which I left
Half open for it, trailing its quaint spires
Along the garden and across the lawn,
And down the slope of moss and through the tufts
Of wild-flower roots, and stumps of trees o'ergrown
With simple lichens, and old hoary stones,
On to the margin of the glassy pool,
Even to a nook of unblown violets
And lilies-of-the-valley yet unborn,
Under a pine with ivy overgrown.
And theme its fruit lay like a sleeping lizard
Under the shadows; but when Spring indeed
Came to unswathe her infants, and the lilies
Peeped from their bright green masks to wonder at
This shape of autumn couched in their recess,
Then it dilated, and it grew until
One half lay floating on the fountain wave,
Whose pulse, elapsed in unlike sympathies,
Kept time
Among the snowy water-lily buds.
Its shape was such as summer melody
Of the south wind in spicy vales might give
To some light cloud bound from the golden dawn
To fairy isles of evening, and it seemed
In hue and form that it had been a mirror
Of all the hues and forms around it and
Upon it pictured by the sunny beams
Which, from the bright vibrations of the pool,
Were thrown upon the rafters and the roof
Of boughs and leaves, and on the pillared stems
Of the dark sylvan temple, and reflections
Of every infant flower and star of moss
And veined leaf in the azure odorous air.
And thus it lay in the Elysian calm
Of its own beauty, floating on the line

Which, like a film in purest space, divided
The heaven beneath the water from the heaven
Above the clouds; and every day I went
Watching its growth and wondering;
And as the day grew hot, methought I saw
A glassy vapour dancing on the pool,
And on it little quaint and filmy shapes.
With dizzy motion, wheel and rise and fall,
Like clouds of gnats with perfect lineaments.

…

O friend, sleep was a veil uplift from Heaven —
As if Heaven dawned upon the world of dream —
When darkness rose on the extinguished day
Out of the eastern wilderness.

INDIAN:
I too
Have found a moment's paradise in sleep
Half compensate a hell of waking sorrow.

CHARLES THE FIRST

Charles the First was designed in 1818, begun towards the close of 1819, resumed in January, and finally laid aside by June, 1822. It was published in part in the "Posthumous Poems", 1824, and printed, in its present form (with the addition of some 530 lines), by Mr. W.M. Rossetti, 1870.

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE:

KING CHARLES I. QUEEN HENRIETTA. LAUD, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY. WENTWORTH, EARL OF STRAFFORD. LORD COTTINGTON. LORD WESTON. LORD COVENTRY. WILLIAMS, BISHOP OF LINCOLN. SECRETARY LYTTELTON. JUXON. ST. JOHN. ARCHY, THE COURT FOOL. HAMPDEN. PYM. CROMWELL. CROMWELL'S DAUGHTER. SIR HARRY VANE THE YOUNGER. LEIGHTON. BASTWICK. PRYNNE. GENTLEMEN OF THE INNS OF COURT, CITIZENS, PURSUIVANTS, MARSHALSMEN, LAW STUDENTS, JUDGES, CLERK.

SCENE 1

THE MASQUE OF THE INNS OF COURT.

A PURSUIVANT:
Place, for the Marshal of the Masque!

FIRST CITIZEN:
What thinkest thou of this quaint masque which turns,
Like morning from the shadow of the night,
The night to day, and London to a place
Of peace and joy?

SECOND CITIZEN:
And Hell to Heaven.
Eight years are gone,
And they seem hours, since in this populous street
I trod on grass made green by summer's rain,
For the red plague kept state within that palace
Where now that vanity reigns. In nine years more
The roots will be refreshed with civil blood;
And thank the mercy of insulted Heaven
That sin and wrongs wound, as an orphan's cry,
The patience of the great Avenger's ear.

A YOUTH:
Yet, father, 'tis a happy sight to see,
Beautiful, innocent, and unforbidden
By God or man;—'tis like the bright procession
Of skiey visions in a solemn dream
From which men wake as from a Paradise,
And draw new strength to tread the thorns of life.
If God be good, wherefore should this be evil?
And if this be not evil, dost thou not draw
Unseasonable poison from the flowers
Which bloom so rarely in this barren world?

Oh, kill these bitter thoughts which make the present
Dark as the future! —

…

When Avarice and Tyranny, vigilant Fear,
And open-eyed Conspiracy lie sleeping
As on Hell's threshold; and all gentle thoughts
Waken to worship Him who giveth joys
With His own gift.

SECOND CITIZEN:
How young art thou in this old age of time!
How green in this gray world? Canst thou discern
The signs of seasons, yet perceive no hint
Of change in that stage-scene in which thou art
Not a spectator but an actor? or
Art thou a puppet moved by [enginery]?
The day that dawns in fire will die in storms,
Even though the noon be calm. My travel's done, —
Before the whirlwind wakes I shall have found
My inn of lasting rest; but thou must still
Be journeying on in this inclement air.
Wrap thy old cloak about thy back;
Nor leave the broad and plain and beaten road,
Although no flowers smile on the trodden dust,
For the violet paths of pleasure. This Charles the First
Rose like the equinoctial sun,…
By vapours, through whose threatening ominous veil
Darting his altered influence he has gained
This height of noon — from which he must decline
Amid the darkness of conflicting storms,
To dank extinction and to latest night…
There goes
The apostate Strafford; he whose titles
whispered aphorisms

From Machiavel and Bacon: and, if Judas
Had been as brazen and as bold as he —

33-37 Canst…enginery 1870;
  Canst thou not think
  Of change in that low scene, in which thou art
  Not a spectator but an actor?… 1824.
43-57 Wrap…bold as he 1870; omitted 1824.

FIRST CITIZEN:
That
Is the Archbishop.

SECOND CITIZEN:
Rather say the Pope:
London will be soon his Rome: he walks
As if he trod upon the heads of men:
He looks elate, drunken with blood and gold; —
Beside him moves the Babylonian woman
Invisibly, and with her as with his shadow,
Mitred adulterer! he is joined in sin,
Which turns Heaven's milk of mercy to revenge.

THIRD CITIZEN [LIFTING UP HIS EYES]:
Good Lord! rain it down upon him!…
Amid her ladies walks the papist queen,
As if her nice feet scorned our English earth.
The Canaanitish Jezebel! I would be
A dog if I might tear her with my teeth!
There's old Sir Henry Vane, the Earl of Pembroke,
Lord Essex, and Lord Keeper Coventry,
And others who make base their English breed
By vile participation of their honours
With papists, atheists, tyrants, and apostates.
When lawyers masque 'tis time for honest men
To strip the vizor from their purposes.
A seasonable time for masquers this!
When Englishmen and Protestants should sit

dust on their dishonoured heads
To avert the wrath of Him whose scourge is felt
For the great sins which have drawn down from Heaven
and foreign overthrow.
The remnant of the martyred saints in Rochefort
Have been abandoned by their faithless allies
To that idolatrous and adulterous torturer
Lewis of France, — the Palatinate is lost —
[ENTER LEIGHTON (WHO HAS BEEN BRANDED IN THE FACE)
AND BASTWICK.]
Canst thou be — art thou?

LEIGHTON:
I WAS Leighton: what
I AM thou seest. And yet turn thine eyes,
And with thy memory look on thy friend's mind,
Which is unchanged, and where is written deep
The sentence of my judge.

THIRD CITIZEN:
Are these the marks with which
Laud thinks to improve the image of his Maker
Stamped on the face of man? Curses upon him,
The impious tyrant!

SECOND CITIZEN:
It is said besides
That lewd and papist drunkards may profane
The Sabbath with their
And has permitted that most heathenish custom
Of dancing round a pole dressed up with wreaths
On May-day.
A man who thus twice crucifies his God
May well … his brother. — In my mind, friend,
The root of all this ill is prelacy.
I would cut up the root.

THIRD CITIZEN:
And by what means?

SECOND CITIZEN:
Smiting each Bishop under the fifth rib.

THIRD CITIZEN:
You seem to know the vulnerable place
Of these same crocodiles.

SECOND CITIZEN:
I learnt it in
Egyptian bondage, sir. Your worm of Nile
Betrays not with its flattering tears like they;
For, when they cannot kill, they whine and weep.
Nor is it half so greedy of men's bodies
As they of soul and all; nor does it wallow
In slime as they in simony and lies
And close lusts of the flesh.

A MARSHALSMAN:
Give place, give place!
You torch-bearers, advance to the great gate,
And then attend the Marshal of the Masque
Into the Royal presence.

A LAW STUDENT:
What thinkest thou
Of this quaint show of ours, my aged friend?
Even now we see the redness of the torches
Inflame the night to the eastward, and the clarions
[Gasp?] to us on the wind's wave. It comes!
And their sounds, floating hither round the pageant,
Rouse up the astonished air.

FIRST CITIZEN:
I will not think but that our country's wounds
May yet be healed. The king is just and gracious,

Though wicked counsels now pervert his will:
These once cast off —

SECOND CITIZEN:
As adders cast their skins
And keep their venom, so kings often change;
Councils and counsellors hang on one another,
Hiding the loathsome
Like the base patchwork of a leper's rags.

THE YOUTH:
Oh, still those dissonant thoughts! — List how the music
Grows on the enchanted air! And see, the torches
Restlessly flashing, and the crowd divided
Like waves before an admiral's prow!

A MARSHALSMAN:
Give place
To the Marshal of the Masque!

A PURSUIVANT:
Room for the King!

THE YOUTH:
How glorious! See those thronging chariots
Rolling, like painted clouds before the wind,
Behind their solemn steeds: how some are shaped
Like curved sea-shells dyed by the azure depths
Of Indian seas; some like the new-born moon;
And some like cars in which the Romans climbed
(Canopied by Victory's eagle-wings outspread)
The Capitolian — See how gloriously
The mettled horses in the torchlight stir
Their gallant riders, while they check their pride,
Like shapes of some diviner element
Than English air, and beings nobler than
The envious and admiring multitude.

138-40 Rolling…depths 1870;
Rolling like painted clouds before the wind
Some are
Like curved shells, dyed by the azure depths 1824.

SECOND CITIZEN:
Ay, there they are —
Nobles, and sons of nobles, patentees,
Monopolists, and stewards of this poor farm,
On whose lean sheep sit the prophetic crows,
Here is the pomp that strips the houseless orphan,
Here is the pride that breaks the desolate heart.
These are the lilies glorious as Solomon,
Who toil not, neither do they spin, — unless
It be the webs they catch poor rogues withal.
Here is the surfeit which to them who earn
The niggard wages of the earth, scarce leaves
The tithe that will support them till they crawl
Back to her cold hard bosom. Here is health
Followed by grim disease, glory by shame,
Waste by lame famine, wealth by squalid want,
And England's sin by England's punishment.
And, as the effect pursues the cause foregone,
Lo, giving substance to my words, behold
At once the sign and the thing signified —
A troop of cripples, beggars, and lean outcasts,
Horsed upon stumbling jades, carted with dung,
Dragged for a day from cellars and low cabins
And rotten hiding-holes, to point the moral
Of this presentment, and bring up the rear
Of painted pomp with misery!

THE YOUTH:
'Tis but
The anti-masque, and serves as discords do
In sweetest music. Who would love May flowers
If they succeeded not to Winter's flaw;

Or day unchanged by night; or joy itself
Without the touch of sorrow?

SECOND CITIZEN:
I and thou-

A MARSHALSMAN:
Place, give place!

SCENE 2

A CHAMBER IN WHITEHALL. ENTER THE KING, QUEEN, LAUD, LORD STRAFTORD, LORD COTTINGTON, AND OTHER LORDS; ARCHY; ALSO ST. JOHN, WITH SOME GENTLEMEN OF THE INNS OF COURT.

KING:
Thanks, gentlemen. I heartily accept
This token of your service: your gay masque
Was performed gallantly. And it shows well
When subjects twine such flowers of [observance?]
With the sharp thorns that deck the English crown.
A gentle heart enjoys what it confers,
Even as it suffers that which it inflicts,
Though Justice guides the stroke.
Accept my hearty thanks.

QUEEN:
And gentlemen,
Call your poor Queen your debtor. Your quaint pageant
Rose on me like the figures of past years,
Treading their still path back to infancy,
More beautiful and mild as they draw nearer
The quiet cradle. I could have almost wept
To think I was in Paris, where these shows
Are well devised — such as I was ere yet
My young heart shared a portion of the burthen,
The careful weight, of this great monarchy.
There, gentlemen, between the sovereign's pleasure
And that which it regards, no clamour lifts
Its proud interposition.
In Paris ribald censurers dare not move
Their poisonous tongues against these sinless sports;
And HIS smile
Warms those who bask in it, as ours would do

If … Take my heart's thanks: add them, gentlemen,
To those good words which, were he King of France,
My royal lord would turn to golden deeds.

ST. JOHN:
Madam, the love of Englishmen can make
The lightest favour of their lawful king
Outweigh a despot's. — We humbly take our leaves,
Enriched by smiles which France can never buy.
[EXEUNT ST. JOHN AND THE GENTLEMEN OF THE INNS OF COURT.]

KING:
My Lord Archbishop,
Mark you what spirit sits in St. John's eyes?
Methinks it is too saucy for this presence.

ARCHY: Yes, pray your Grace look: for, like an unsophisticated [eye] sees everything upside down, you who are wise will discern the shadow of an idiot in lawn sleeves and a rochet setting springes to catch woodcocks in haymaking time. Poor Archy, whose owl-eyes are tempered to the error of his age, and because he is a fool, and by special ordinance of God forbidden ever to see himself as he is, sees now in that deep eye a blindfold devil sitting on the ball, and weighing words out between king and subjects. One scale is full of promises, and the other full of protestations: and then another devil creeps behind the first out of the dark windings [of a] pregnant lawyer's brain, and takes the bandage from the other's eyes, and throws a sword into the left-hand scale, for all the world like my Lord Essex's there.

STRAFFORD:
A rod in pickle for the Fool's back!

ARCHY:
Ay, and some are now smiling whose tears will make the brine; for the Fool sees —

STRAFFORD: Insolent! You shall have your coat turned and be whipped out of the palace for this.

ARCHY: When all the fools are whipped, and all the Protestant writers, while the knaves are whipping the fools ever since a thief was set to catch a thief. If all turncoats were whipped out of palaces, poor Archy would be disgraced in good company. Let the knaves whip the fools, and all the fools laugh at it. [Let the] wise and godly slit each other's noses and ears (having no need of any sense of discernment in their craft); and the knaves, to marshal them, join in a procession to Bedlam, to entreat the madmen to omit their sublime Platonic contemplations, and manage the state of England. Let all the honest men who lie [pinched?] up at the prisons or the pillories, in custody of the pursuivants of the High-Commission Court, marshal them.

[ENTER SECRETARY LYTTELTON, WITH PAPERS.]

KING [LOOKING OVER THE PAPERS]:
These stiff Scots
His Grace of Canterbury must take order
To force under the Church's yoke. — You, Wentworth,
Shall be myself in Ireland, and shall add
Your wisdom, gentleness, and energy,
To what in me were wanting. — My Lord Weston,
Look that those merchants draw not without loss
Their bullion from the Tower; and, on the payment
Of shipmoney, take fullest compensation
For violation of our royal forests,
Whose limits, from neglect, have been o'ergrown
With cottages and cornfields. The uttermost
Farthing exact from those who claim exemption
From knighthood: that which once was a reward
Shall thus be made a punishment, that subjects
May know how majesty can wear at will
The rugged mood. — My Lord of Coventry,
Lay my command upon the Courts below
That bail be not accepted for the prisoners

Under the warrant of the Star Chamber.
The people shall not find the stubbornness
Of Parliament a cheap or easy method
Of dealing with their rightful sovereign:
And doubt not this, my Lord of Coventry,
We will find time and place for fit rebuke. —
My Lord of Canterbury.

ARCHY:
The fool is here.

LAUD:
I crave permission of your Majesty
To order that this insolent fellow be
Chastised: he mocks the sacred character,
Scoffs at the state, and —

KING:
What, my Archy?
He mocks and mimics all he sees and hears,
Yet with a quaint and graceful licence — Prithee
For this once do not as Prynne would, were he
Primate of England. With your Grace's leave,
He lives in his own world; and, like a parrot
Hung in his gilded prison from the window
Of a queen's bower over the public way,
Blasphemes with a bird's mind: — his words, like arrows
Which know no aim beyond the archer's wit,
Strike sometimes what eludes philosophy. —
[TO ARCHY.]
Go, sirrah, and repent of your offence
Ten minutes in the rain; be it your penance
To bring news how the world goes there.
[EXIT ARCHY.]
Poor Archy!
He weaves about himself a world of mirth
Out of the wreck of ours.

NOTES: 99 With your Grace's leave 1870; omitted 1824. 106-110 Go… ours spoken by THE QUEEN, 1824.

LAUD:
I take with patience, as my Master did,
All scoffs permitted from above.

KING:
My lord,
Pray overlook these papers. Archy's words
Had wings, but these have talons.

QUEEN:
And the lion
That wears them must be tamed. My dearest lord,
I see the new-born courage in your eye
Armed to strike dead the Spirit of the Time,
Which spurs to rage the many-headed beast.
Do thou persist: for, faint but in resolve,
And it were better thou hadst still remained
The slave of thine own slaves, who tear like curs
The fugitive, and flee from the pursuer;
And Opportunity, that empty wolf,
Flies at his throat who falls. Subdue thy actions
Even to the disposition of thy purpose,
And be that tempered as the Ebro's steel;
And banish weak-eyed Mercy to the weak,
Whence she will greet thee with a gift of peace
And not betray thee with a traitor's kiss,
As when she keeps the company of rebels,
Who think that she is Fear. This do, lest we
Should fall as from a glorious pinnacle
In a bright dream, and wake as from a dream
Out of our worshipped state.

KING:
Beloved friend,
God is my witness that this weight of power,

Which He sets me my earthly task to wield
Under His law, is my delight and pride
Only because thou lovest that and me.
For a king bears the office of a God
To all the under world; and to his God
Alone he must deliver up his trust,
Unshorn of its permitted attributes.
[It seems] now as the baser elements
Had mutinied against the golden sun
That kindles them to harmony, and quells
Their self-destroying rapine. The wild million
Strike at the eye that guides them; like as humours
Of the distempered body that conspire
Against the spirit of life throned in the heart, —
And thus become the prey of one another,
And last of death —

STRAFFORD:
That which would be ambition in a subject
Is duty in a sovereign; for on him,
As on a keystone, hangs the arch of life,
Whose safety is its strength. Degree and form,
And all that makes the age of reasoning man
More memorable than a beast's, depend on this —
That Right should fence itself inviolably
With Power; in which respect the state of England
From usurpation by the insolent commons
Cries for reform.
Get treason, and spare treasure. Fee with coin
The loudest murmurers; feed with jealousies
Opposing factions, — be thyself of none;
And borrow gold of many, for those who lend
Will serve thee till thou payest them; and thus
Keep the fierce spirit of the hour at bay,
Till time, and its coming generations
Of nights and days unborn, bring some one chance,

…

Or war or pestilence or Nature's self, —
By some distemperature or terrible sign,
Be as an arbiter betwixt themselves.
Nor let your Majesty
Doubt here the peril of the unseen event.
How did your brother Kings, coheritors
In your high interest in the subject earth,
Rise past such troubles to that height of power
Where now they sit, and awfully serene
Smile on the trembling world? Such popular storms
Philip the Second of Spain, this Lewis of France,
And late the German head of many bodies,
And every petty lord of Italy,
Quelled or by arts or arms. Is England poorer
Or feebler? or art thou who wield'st her power
Tamer than they? or shall this island be —
[Girdled] by its inviolable waters —
To the world present and the world to come
Sole pattern of extinguished monarchy?
Not if thou dost as I would have thee do.

KING:
Your words shall be my deeds:
You speak the image of my thought. My friend
(If Kings can have a friend, I call thee so),
Beyond the large commission which [belongs]
Under the great seal of the realm, take this:
And, for some obvious reasons, let there be
No seal on it, except my kingly word
And honour as I am a gentleman.
Be — as thou art within my heart and mind —
Another self, here and in Ireland:
Do what thou judgest well, take amplest licence,
And stick not even at questionable means.
Hear me, Wentworth. My word is as a wall

Between thee and this world thine enemy —
That hates thee, for thou lovest me.

STRAFFORD:
I own
No friend but thee, no enemies but thine:
Thy lightest thought is my eternal law.
How weak, how short, is life to pay —

KING:
Peace, peace.
Thou ow'st me nothing yet.
[TO LAUD.]
My lord, what say
Those papers?

LAUD:
Your Majesty has ever interposed,
In lenity towards your native soil,
Between the heavy vengeance of the Church
And Scotland. Mark the consequence of warming
This brood of northern vipers in your bosom.
The rabble, instructed no doubt
By London, Lindsay, Hume, and false Argyll
(For the waves never menace heaven until
Scourged by the wind's invisible tyranny),
Have in the very temple of the Lord
Done outrage to His chosen ministers.
They scorn the liturgy of the Holy Church,
Refuse to obey her canons, and deny
The apostolic power with which the Spirit
Has filled its elect vessels, even from him
Who held the keys with power to loose and bind,
To him who now pleads in this royal presence. —
Let ample powers and new instructions be
Sent to the High Commissioners in Scotland.
To death, imprisonment, and confiscation,

Add torture, add the ruin of the kindred
Of the offender, add the brand of infamy,
Add mutilation: and if this suffice not,
Unleash the sword and fire, that in their thirst
They may lick up that scum of schismatics.
I laugh at those weak rebels who, desiring
What we possess, still prate of Christian peace,
As if those dreadful arbitrating messengers
Which play the part of God 'twixt right and wrong,
Should be let loose against the innocent sleep
Of templed cities and the smiling fields,
For some poor argument of policy
Which touches our own profit or our pride
(Where it indeed were Christian charity
To turn the cheek even to the smiter's hand):
And, when our great Redeemer, when our God,
When He who gave, accepted, and retained
Himself in propitiation of our sins,
Is scorned in His immediate ministry,
With hazard of the inestimable loss
Of all the truth and discipline which is
Salvation to the extremest generation
Of men innumerable, they talk of peace!
Such peace as Canaan found, let Scotland now:
For, by that Christ who came to bring a sword,
Not peace, upon the earth, and gave command
To His disciples at the Passover
That each should sell his robe and buy a sword,-
Once strip that minister of naked wrath,
And it shall never sleep in peace again
Till Scotland bend or break.

KING:
My Lord Archbishop,
Do what thou wilt and what thou canst in this.
Thy earthly even as thy heavenly King
Gives thee large power in his unquiet realm.

But we want money, and my mind misgives me
That for so great an enterprise, as yet,
We are unfurnished.

STRAFFORD:
Yet it may not long
Rest on our wills.

COTTINGTON:
The expenses
Of gathering shipmoney, and of distraining
For every petty rate (for we encounter
A desperate opposition inch by inch
In every warehouse and on every farm),
Have swallowed up the gross sum of the imposts;
So that, though felt as a most grievous scourge
Upon the land, they stand us in small stead
As touches the receipt.

STRAFFORD:
'Tis a conclusion
Most arithmetical: and thence you infer
Perhaps the assembling of a parliament.
Now, if a man should call his dearest enemies
T0 sit in licensed judgement on his life,
His Majesty might wisely take that course.
[ASIDE TO COTTINGTON.]
It is enough to expect from these lean imposts
That they perform the office of a scourge,
Without more profit.
[ALOUD.]
Fines and confiscations,
And a forced loan from the refractory city,
Will fill our coffers: and the golden love
Of loyal gentlemen and noble friends
For the worshipped father of our common country,
With contributions from the catholics,

Will make Rebellion pale in our excess.
Be these the expedients until time and wisdom
Shall frame a settled state of government.

LAUD:
And weak expedients they! Have we not drained
All, till the … which seemed
A mine exhaustless?

STRAFFORD:
And the love which IS,
If loyal hearts could turn their blood to gold.

LAUD:
Both now grow barren: and I speak it not
As loving parliaments, which, as they have been
In the right hand of bold bad mighty kings
The scourges of the bleeding Church, I hate.
Methinks they scarcely can deserve our fear.

STRAFFORD:
Oh! my dear liege, take back the wealth thou gavest:
With that, take all I held, but as in trust
For thee, of mine inheritance: leave me but
This unprovided body for thy service,
And a mind dedicated to no care
Except thy safety: — but assemble not
A parliament. Hundreds will bring, like me,
Their fortunes, as they would their blood, before —

KING:
No! thou who judgest them art but one. Alas!
We should be too much out of love with Heaven,
Did this vile world show many such as thee,
Thou perfect, just, and honourable man!
Never shall it be said that Charles of England
Stripped those he loved for fear of those he scorns;
Nor will he so much misbecome his throne

As to impoverish those who most adorn
And best defend it. That you urge, dear Strafford,
Inclines me rather —

QUEEN:
To a parliament?
Is this thy firmness? and thou wilt preside
Over a knot of … censurers,
To the unswearing of thy best resolves,
And choose the worst, when the worst comes too soon?
Plight not the worst before the worst must come.
Oh, wilt thou smile whilst our ribald foes,
Dressed in their own usurped authority,
Sharpen their tongues on Henrietta's fame?
It is enough! Thou lovest me no more!
[WEEPS.]

KING:
Oh, Henrietta!
[THEY TALK APART.]

COTTINGTON [TO LAUD]:
Money we have none:
And all the expedients of my Lord of Strafford
Will scarcely meet the arrears.

LAUD:
Without delay
An army must be sent into the north;
Followed by a Commission of the Church,
With amplest power to quench in fire and blood,
And tears and terror, and the pity of hell,
The intenser wrath of Heresy. God will give
Victory; and victory over Scotland give
The lion England tamed into our hands.
That will lend power, and power bring gold.

COTTINGTON:
Meanwhile
We must begin first where your Grace leaves off.
Gold must give power, or —

LAUD:
I am not averse
From the assembling of a parliament.
Strong actions and smooth words might teach them soon
The lesson to obey. And are they not
A bubble fashioned by the monarch's mouth,
The birth of one light breath? If they serve no purpose,
A word dissolves them.

STRAFFORD:
The engine of parliaments
Might be deferred until I can bring over
The Irish regiments: they will serve to assure
The issue of the war against the Scots.
And, this game won — which if lost, all is lost —
Gather these chosen leaders of the rebels,
And call them, if you will, a parliament.

KING:
Oh, be our feet still tardy to shed blood.
Guilty though it may be! I would still spare
The stubborn country of my birth, and ward
From countenances which I loved in youth
The wrathful Church's lacerating hand.
[TO LAUD.]
Have you o'erlooked the other articles?
[ENTER ARCHY.]

LAUD:
Hazlerig, Hampden, Pym, young Harry Vane,
Cromwell, and other rebels of less note,
Intend to sail with the next favouring wind
For the Plantations.

ARCHY:
Where they think to found
A commonwealth like Gonzalo's in the play,
Gynaecocoenic and pantisocratic.

KING:
What's that, sirrah?

ARCHY:
New devil's politics.
Hell is the pattern of all commonwealths:
Lucifer was the first republican.
Will you hear Merlin's prophecy, how three [posts?]
'In one brainless skull, when the whitethorn is full,
Shall sail round the world, and come back again:
Shall sail round the world in a brainless skull,
And come back again when the moon is at full:' —
When, in spite of the Church,
They will hear homilies of whatever length
Or form they please.

[COTTINGTON?]:
So please your Majesty to sign this order
For their detention.

ARCHY: If your Majesty were tormented night and day by fever, gout, rheumatism, and stone, and asthma, etc., and you found these diseases had secretly entered into a conspiracy to abandon you, should you think it necessary to lay an embargo on the port by which they meant to dispeople your unquiet kingdom of man?

KING:
If fear were made for kings, the Fool mocks wisely;
But in this case — [WRITING]. Here, my lord, take the warrant,
And see it duly executed forthwith. —
That imp of malice and mockery shall be punished.
[EXEUNT ALL BUT KING, QUEEN, AND ARCHY.]

ARCHY: Ay, I am the physician of whom Plato prophesied, who was to be accused by the confectioner before a jury of children, who found him guilty without waiting for the summing-up, and hanged him without benefit of clergy. Thus Baby Charles, and the Twelfth-night Queen of Hearts, and the overgrown schoolboy Cottington, and that little urchin Laud — who would reduce a verdict of 'guilty, death,' by famine, if it were impregnable by composition — all impannelled against poor Archy for presenting them bitter physic the last day of the holidays.

QUEEN:
Is the rain over, sirrah?

KING:
When it rains
And the sun shines, 'twill rain again to-morrow:
And therefore never smile till you've done crying.

ARCHY: But 'tis all over now: like the April anger of woman, the gentle sky has wept itself serene.

QUEEN:
What news abroad? how looks the world this morning?

ARCHY: Gloriously as a grave covered with virgin flowers. There's a rainbow in the sky. Let your Majesty look at it, for

'A rainbow in the morning
Is the shepherd's warning;'

and the flocks of which you are the pastor are scattered among the mountain-tops, where every drop of water is a flake of snow, and the breath of May pierces like a January blast.

KING: The sheep have mistaken the wolf for their shepherd, my poor boy; and the shepherd, the wolves for their watchdogs.

QUEEN: But the rainbow was a good sign, Archy: it says that the waters of the deluge are gone, and can return no more.

ARCHY: Ay, the salt-water one: but that of tears and blood must yet come down, and that of fire follow, if there be any truth in lies. — The rainbow hung over the city with all its shops,…and churches, from north to south, like a bridge of congregated lightning pieced by the masonry of heaven — like a balance in which the angel that distributes the coming hour was weighing that heavy one whose poise is now felt in the lightest hearts, before it bows the proudest heads under the meanest feet.

QUEEN:
Who taught you this trash, sirrah?

ARCHY: A torn leaf out of an old book trampled in the dirt. — But for the rainbow. It moved as the sun moved, and…until the top of the Tower…of a cloud through its left-hand tip, and Lambeth Palace look as dark as a rock before the other. Methought I saw a crown figured upon one tip, and a mitre on the other. So, as I had heard treasures were found where the rainbow quenches its points upon the earth, I set off, and at the Tower — But I shall not tell your Majesty what I found close to the closet-window on which the rainbow had glimmered.

KING:
Speak: I will make my Fool my conscience.

ARCHY: Then conscience is a fool. — I saw there a cat caught in a rat-trap. I heard the rats squeak behind the wainscots: it seemed to me that the very mice were consulting on the manner of her death.

QUEEN:
Archy is shrewd and bitter.

ARCHY: Like the season, 440 So blow the winds. — But at the other end of the rainbow, where the gray rain was tempered along the grass and leaves by a tender interfusion of violet and gold in the meadows beyond Lambeth, what think you that I found instead of a mitre?

KING:
Vane's wits perhaps.

ARCHY: Something as vain. I saw a gross vapour hovering in a stinking ditch over the carcass of a dead ass, some rotten rags, and broken dishes — the wrecks of what once administered to the stuffing-out and the ornament of a worm of worms. His Grace of Canterbury expects to enter the New Jerusalem some Palm Sunday in triumph on the ghost of this ass.

QUEEN:
Enough, enough! Go desire Lady Jane
She place my lute, together with the music
Mari received last week from Italy,
In my boudoir, and —
[EXIT ARCHY.]

KING:
I'll go in.

QUEEN:
MY beloved lord,
Have you not noted that the Fool of late
Has lost his careless mirth, and that his words
Sound like the echoes of our saddest fears?
What can it mean? I should be loth to think
Some factious slave had tutored him.

KING:
Oh, no!
He is but Occasion's pupil. Partly 'tis
That our minds piece the vacant intervals
Of his wild words with their own fashioning, —
As in the imagery of summer clouds,
Or coals of the winter fire, idlers find
The perfect shadows of their teeming thoughts:
And partly, that the terrors of the time
Are sown by wandering Rumour in all spirits;
And in the lightest and the least, may best
Be seen the current of the coming wind.

QUEEN:
Your brain is overwrought with these deep thoughts.
Come, I will sing to you; let us go try
These airs from Italy; and, as we pass
The gallery, we'll decide where that Correggio
Shall hang — the Virgin Mother
With her child, born the King of heaven and earth,
Whose reign is men's salvation. And you shall see
A cradled miniature of yourself asleep,
Stamped on the heart by never-erring love;
Liker than any Vandyke ever made,
A pattern to the unborn age of thee,
Over whose sweet beauty I have wept for joy
A thousand times, and now should weep for sorrow,
Did I not think that after we were dead
Our fortunes would spring high in him, and that
The cares we waste upon our heavy crown
Would make it light and glorious as a wreath
Of Heaven's beams for his dear innocent brow.

KING:
Dear Henrietta!

SCENE 3

THE STAR CHAMBER. LAUD, JUXON, STRAFFORD, AND OTHERS, AS JUDGES. PRYNNE AS A PRISONER, AND THEN BASTWICK.

LAUD:
Bring forth the prisoner Bastwick: let the clerk
Recite his sentence.

CLERK:
'That he pay five thousand
Pounds to the king, lose both his ears, be branded
With red-hot iron on the cheek and forehead,
And be imprisoned within Lancaster Castle
During the pleasure of the Court.'

LAUD:
Prisoner,
If you have aught to say wherefore this sentence
Should not be put into effect, now speak.

JUXON:
If you have aught to plead in mitigation,
Speak.

BASTWICK:
Thus, my lords. If, like the prelates, I
Were an invader of the royal power
A public scorner of the word of God,
Profane, idolatrous, popish, superstitious,
Impious in heart and in tyrannic act,
Void of wit, honesty, and temperance;
If Satan were my lord, as theirs, — our God
Pattern of all I should avoid to do;
Were I an enemy of my God and King
And of good men, as ye are; — I should merit
Your fearful state and gilt prosperity,

Which, when ye wake from the last sleep, shall turn
To cowls and robes of everlasting fire.
But, as I am, I bid ye grudge me not
The only earthly favour ye can yield,
Or I think worth acceptance at your hands, —
Scorn, mutilation, and imprisonment.
even as my Master did,
Until Heaven's kingdom shall descend on earth,
Or earth be like a shadow in the light
Of Heaven absorbed — some few tumultuous years
Will pass, and leave no wreck of what opposes
His will whose will is power.

LAUD:
Officer, take the prisoner from the bar,
And be his tongue slit for his insolence.

BASTWICK:
While this hand holds a pen —

LAUD:
Be his hands —

JUXON:
Stop!
Forbear, my lord! The tongue, which now can speak
No terror, would interpret, being dumb,
Heaven's thunder to our harm;…
And hands, which now write only their own shame,
With bleeding stumps might sign our blood away.

LAUD:
Much more such 'mercy' among men would be,
Did all the ministers of Heaven's revenge
Flinch thus from earthly retribution. I
Could suffer what I would inflict.
[EXIT BASTWICK GUARDED.]
Bring up

The Lord Bishop of Lincoln. —
[TO STRATFORD.]
Know you not
That, in distraining for ten thousand pounds
Upon his books and furniture at Lincoln,
Were found these scandalous and seditious letters
Sent from one Osbaldistone, who is fled?
I speak it not as touching this poor person;
But of the office which should make it holy,
Were it as vile as it was ever spotless.
Mark too, my lord, that this expression strikes
His Majesty, if I misinterpret not.
[ENTER BISHOP WILLIAMS GUARDED.]

STRAFFORD:
'Twere politic and just that Williams taste
The bitter fruit of his connection with
The schismatics. But you, my Lord Archbishop,
Who owed your first promotion to his favour,
Who grew beneath his smile —

LAUD:
Would therefore beg
The office of his judge from this High Court, —
That it shall seem, even as it is, that I,
In my assumption of this sacred robe,
Have put aside all worldly preference,
All sense of all distinction of all persons,
All thoughts but of the service of the Church. —
Bishop of Lincoln!

WILLIAMS:
Peace, proud hierarch!
I know my sentence, and I own it just.
Thou wilt repay me less than I deserve,
In stretching to the utmost

…

Scene 3. 1-69 Bring…utmost 1870; omitted 1824.

SCENE 4

HAMPDEN, PYM, CROMWELL, HIS DAUGHTER, AND YOUNG SIR HARRY VANE.

HAMPDEN:
England, farewell! thou, who hast been my cradle,
Shalt never be my dungeon or my grave!
I held what I inherited in thee
As pawn for that inheritance of freedom
Which thou hast sold for thy despoiler's smile:
How can I call thee England, or my country? —
Does the wind hold?

VANE:
The vanes sit steady
Upon the Abbey towers. The silver lightnings
Of the evening star, spite of the city's smoke,
Tell that the north wind reigns in the upper air.
Mark too that flock of fleecy-winged clouds
Sailing athwart St. Margaret's.

HAMPDEN:
Hail, fleet herald
Of tempest! that rude pilot who shall guide
Hearts free as his, to realms as pure as thee,
Beyond the shot of tyranny,
Beyond the webs of that swoln spider…
Beyond the curses, calumnies, and [lies?]
Of atheist priests! … And thou
Fair star, whose beam lies on the wide Atlantic,
Athwart its zones of tempest and of calm,
Bright as the path to a beloved home
Oh, light us to the isles of the evening land!
Like floating Edens cradled in the glimmer
Of sunset, through the distant mist of years
Touched by departing hope, they gleam! lone regions,

Where Power's poor dupes and victims yet have never
Propitiated the savage fear of kings
With purest blood of noblest hearts; whose dew
Is yet unstained with tears of those who wake
To weep each day the wrongs on which it dawns;
Whose sacred silent air owns yet no echo
Of formal blasphemies; nor impious rites
Wrest man's free worship, from the God who loves,
To the poor worm who envies us His love!
Receive, thou young … of Paradise.
These exiles from the old and sinful world!

…

This glorious clime, this firmament, whose lights
Dart mitigated influence through their veil
Of pale blue atmosphere; whose tears keep green
The pavement of this moist all-feeding earth;
This vaporous horizon, whose dim round
Is bastioned by the circumfluous sea,
Repelling invasion from the sacred towers,
Presses upon me like a dungeon's grate,
A low dark roof, a damp and narrow wall.
The boundless universe
Becomes a cell too narrow for the soul
That owns no master; while the loathliest ward
Of this wide prison, England, is a nest
Of cradling peace built on the mountain tops, —
To which the eagle spirits of the free,
Which range through heaven and earth, and scorn the storm
Of time, and gaze upon the light of truth,
Return to brood on thoughts that cannot die
And cannot be repelled.
Like eaglets floating in the heaven of time,
They soar above their quarry, and shall stoop
Through palaces and temples thunderproof.

SCENE 5

ARCHY: I'll go live under the ivy that overgrows the terrace, and count the tears shed on its old [roots?] as the [wind?] plays the song of

'A widow bird sate mourning
Upon a wintry bough.'
[SINGS]
Heigho! the lark and the owl!
One flies the morning, and one lulls the night: —
Only the nightingale, poor fond soul,
Sings like the fool through darkness and light.

'A widow bird sate mourning for her love
Upon a wintry bough;
The frozen wind crept on above,
The freezing stream below.

There was no leaf upon the forest bare.
No flower upon the ground,
And little motion in the air
Except the mill-wheel's sound.'

Scene 5. 1-9 I'll…light 1870; omitted 1824.

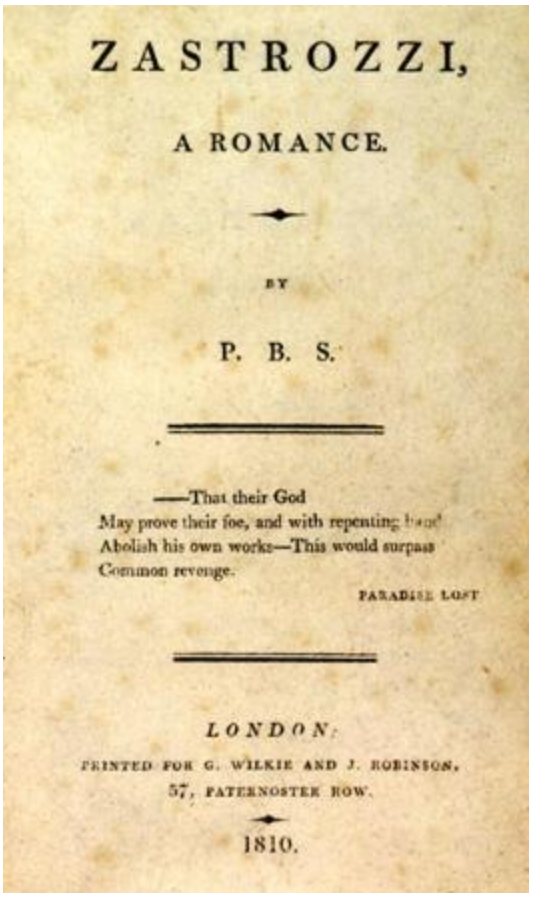
The Novels

University College, Oxford, where Shelley enrolled in 1810. Legend has it that the poet attended only one lecture while at Oxford, though he often read for sixteen hours a day.

ZASTROZZI

Being Shelley's first published prose work, this short gothic novel was first published in 1810 in London by George Wilkie and John Robinson, displaying only the initials of the author's name. The novel outlines Shelley's atheistic worldview through the villain Zastrozzi, expressing the author's earliest thoughts on irresponsible self-indulgence and violent revenge. Shelley wrote *Zastrozzi* at the age of seventeen, whilst attending his last year at Eton College, though it was not published until he was attending Oxford University.

The Gentleman's Magazine, regarded as the first literary magazine of the time, published a favourable review of the novel in 1810: "A short, but well-told tale of horror, and, if we do not mistake, not from an ordinary pen. The story is so artfully conducted that the reader cannot easily anticipate the denouement." *The Critical Review*, a conservative journal, on the other hand, called the main character Zastrozzi "one of the most savage and improbable demons that ever issued from a diseased brain." The reviewer dismissed the novel: "We know not when we have felt so much indignation as in the perusal of this execrable production. The author of it cannot be too severely reprobated. Not all his 'scintillated eyes,' his 'battling emotions,' his 'frigorific torpidity of despair'... ought to save him from infamy, and his volume from the flames."



ZASTROZZI,

A ROMANCE.

BY

P. B. S.

—That their God
May prove their foe, and with repenting hand
Abolish his own works—This would surpass
Common revenge.

PARADISE LOST

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR G. WILKIE AND J. ROBINSON,
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1810.

The 1810 title page

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CHAPTER I.

— That their God
May prove their foe, and with repenting hand
Abolish his own works — This would surpass
Common revenge.
— Paradise Lost.

Torn from the society of all he held dear on earth, the victim of secret enemies, and exiled from happiness, was the wretched Verezzi!

All was quiet; a pitchy darkness in volved the face of things, when, urged by fiercest revenge, placed himself at the door of the inn where, undisturbed, Verezzi slept.

Loudly he called the landlord. The landlord, to whom the bare name of was terrible, trembling obeyed the summons.

“Thou knowest Verezzi the Italian? he lodges here.” “He does,” answered the landlord.

“Him, then, have I devoted to destruction,” exclaimed . “Let Ugo and Bernardo follow you to his apartment; I will be with you to prevent mischief.”

Cautiously they ascended — successfully they executed their revengeful purpose, and bore the sleeping Verezzi to the place, where a chariot waited to convey the vindictive ‘s prey to the place of its destination.

Ugo and Bernardo lifted the still sleeping Verezzi into the chariot. Rapidly they travelled onwards for several hours. Verezzi was still wrapped in deep sleep, from which all the movements he had undergone had been insufficient to rouse him.

and Ugo were masked, as was Bernardo, who acted as postition.

It was still dark, when they stopped at a small inn, on a remote and desolate heath; and waiting but to change horses, again advanced. At last day appeared — still the slumbers of Verezzi remained unbroken.

Ugo fearfully questioned as to the cause of his extraordinary sleep. Zastrozzi, who, however, was well acquainted with it, gloomily answered, “I know not.”

Swiftly they travelled during the whole of the day, over which nature seemed to have drawn her most gloomy curtain. — They stopped

occasionally at inns to change horses and obtain refreshments.

Night came on — they forsook the beaten track, and, entering an immense forest, made their way slowly through the rugged underwood.

At last they stopped — they lifted their victim from the chariot, and bore him to a cavern, which yawned in a dell close by.

Not long did the hapless victim of unmerited persecution enjoy an oblivion which deprived him of a knowledge of his horrible situation. He awoke — and overcome by excess of terror, started violently from the ruffians' arms.

They had now entered the cavern — Verezzi supported himself against a fragment of rock which jutted out.

"Resistance is useless," exclaimed ; "following us in submissive silence can alone procure the slightest mitigation of your punishment."

Verezzi followed as fast as his frame, weakened by unnatural sleep, and enfeebled by recent illness, would permit; yet, scarcely believing that he was awake, and not thoroughly convinced of the reality of the scene before him, he viewed every thing with that kind of inexplicable horror, which a terrible dream is wont to excite.

After winding down the rugged descent for some time, they arrived at an iron door, which at first sight appeared to be part of the rock itself. Every thing had till now been obscured by total darkness; and Verezzi, for the first time, saw the masked faces of his persecutors, which a torch brought by Bernardo rendered visible.

The massy door flew open.

The torches from without rendered the darkness which reigned within still more horrible; and Verezzi beheld the interior of this cavern as a place whence he was never again about to emerge — as his grave. Again he struggled with his persecutors, but his enfeebled frame was insufficient to support a conflict with the strong-nerved Ugo, and, subdued, he sank fainting into his arms.

His triumphant persecutor bore him into the damp cell, and chained him to the wall. An iron chain encircled his waist; his limbs, which not even a little straw kept from the rock, were fixed by immense staples to the flinty floor; and but one of his hands was left at liberty, to take the scanty pittance of bread and water which was daily allowed him.

Every thing was denied him but thought, which, by comparing the present with the past, was his greatest torment.

Ugo entered the cell every morning and evening, to bring coarse bread, and a pitcher of water, seldom, yet sometimes, accompanied by .

In vain did he implore mercy, pity, and even death: useless were all his enquiries concerning the cause of his barbarous imprisonment — a stern silence was maintained by his relentless gaoler.

Languishing in painful captivity, Verezzi passed days and nights seemingly countless, in the same monotonous uniformity of horror and despair. He scarcely now shuddered when the slimy lizard crossed his naked and motionless limbs. The large earth-worms, which twined themselves in his long and matted hair, almost ceased to excite sensations of horror.

Days and nights were undistinguishable from each other; and the period which he had passed there, though in reality but a few weeks, was lengthened by his perturbed imagination into many years. Sometimes he scarcely supposed that his torments were earthly, but that Ugo, whose countenance bespoke him a demon, was the fury who blasted his reviving hopes. His mysterious removal from the inn near Munich also confused his ideas, and he never could bring his thoughts to any conclusion on the subject which occupied them.

One evening, overcome by long watching, he sank to sleep, for almost the first time since his confinement, when he was aroused by a loud crash, which seemed to burst over the cavern. Attentively he listened — he even hoped, though hope was almost dead within his breast. Again he listened — again the same noise was repeated — it was but a violent thunderstorm which shook the elements above.

Convinced of the folly of hope, he addressed a prayer to his Creator — to Him who hears a suppliant from the bowels of the earth. His thoughts were elevated above terrestrial enjoyments — his sufferings sank into nothing on the comparison.

Whilst his thoughts were thus employed, a more violent crash shook the cavern. A scintillating flame darted from the cieling to the floor. Almost at the same instant the roof fell in.

A large fragment of the rock was laid athwart the cavern; one end being grooved into the solid wall, the other having almost forced open the massy iron door.

Verezzi was chained to a piece of rock which remained immoveable. The violence of the storm was past, but the hail descended rapidly, each stone of which wounded his naked limbs. Every flash of lightning, although now

distant, dazzled his eyes, unaccustomed as they had been to the least ray of light.

The storm at last ceased, the pealing thunders died away in indistinct murmurs, and the lightning was too faint to be visible. Day appeared — no one had yet been to the cavern — Verezzi concluded that they either intended him to perish with hunger, or that some misfortune, by which they themselves had suffered, had occurred. In the most solemn manner, therefore, he now prepared himself for death, which he was fully convinced within himself was rapidly approaching.

His pitcher of water was broken by the falling fragments, and a small crust of bread was all that now remained of his scanty allowance of provisions.

A burning fever raged through his veins; and, delirious with despairing illness, he cast from him the crust which alone could now retard the rapid advances of death.

Oh! what ravages did the united efforts of disease and suffering make on the manly and handsome figure of Verezzi! His bones had almost started through his skin; his eyes were sunken and hollow; and his hair, matted with the damps, hung in strings upon his faded cheek. The day passed as had the morning — death was every instant before his eyes — a lingering death by famine — he felt its approaches: night came, but with it brought no change. He was aroused by a noise against the iron door: it was the time when Ugo usually brought fresh provisions. The noise lessened, at last it totally ceased — with it ceased all hope of life in Verezzi's bosom. A cold tremor pervaded his limbs — his eyes but faintly presented to his imagination the ruined cavern — he sank, as far as the chain which encircled his waist would permit him, upon the flinty pavement; and, in the crisis of the fever which then occurred, his youth and good constitution prevailed.

CHAPTER II.

In the mean time Ugo, who had received orders from not to allow Verezzi to die, came at the accustomed hour to bring provisions, but finding that, in the last night's storm, the rock had been struck by lightning, concluded that Verezzi had lost his life amid the ruins, and he went with this news to Zastrozzi. — Zastrozzi, who, for inexplicable reasons, wished not Verezzi's death, sent Ugo and Bernardo to search for him.

After a long scrutiny, they discovered their hapless victim. He was chained to the rock where they had left him, but in that exhausted condition, which want of food, and a violent fever, had reduced him to.

They unchained him, and lifting him into a chariot, after four hours rapid travelling, brought the insensible Verezzi to a cottage, inhabited by an old woman alone. The cottage stood on an immense heath, lonely, desolate, and remote from other human habitation.

awaited their arrival with impatience: eagerly he flew to meet them, and, with a demoniac smile, surveyed the agonised features of his prey, who lay insensible and stretched on the shoulders of Ugo.

"His life must not be lost," exclaimed ; "I have need of it. Tell Bianca, therefore, to prepare a bed."

Ugo obeyed, and Bernardo followed, bearing the emaciated Verezzi. A physician was sent for, who declared, that the crisis of the fever which had attacked him being past, proper care might reinstate him; but that the disorder having attacked his brain, a tranquillity of mind was absolutely necessary for his recovery.

, to whom the life, though not the happiness of Verezzi was requisite, saw that his too eager desire for revenge had carried him beyond his point. He saw that some deception was requisite; he accordingly instructed the old woman to inform him, when he recovered, that he was placed in this situation, because the physicians had asserted that the air of this country was necessary for a recovery from a brain fever which had attacked him.

It was long before Verezzi recovered — long did he languish in torpid insensibility, during which his soul seemed to have winged its way to happier regions.

At last, however, he recovered, and the first use he made of his senses was to inquire where he was.

The old woman told him the story, which she had been instructed in by .

“Who ordered me then to be chained in that desolate and dark cavern,” inquired Verezzi, “where I have been for many years, and suffered most insupportable torments?”

“Lord bless me!” said the old woman: “why, baron, how strangely you talk! I begin to fear you will again lose your senses, at the very time when you ought to be thanking God for suffering them to return to you. What can you mean by being chained in a cavern? I declare I am frightened at the very thought: pray do compose yourself.”

Verezzi was much perplexed by the old woman’s assertions. That Julia should send him to a mean cottage, and desert him, was impossible.

The old woman’s relation seemed so well connected, and told with such an air of characteristic simplicity, that he could not disbelieve her.

But to doubt the evidence of his own senses, and the strong proofs of his imprisonment, which the deep marks of the chains had left till now, was impossible.

Had not those marks still remained, he would have conceived the horrible events which had led him thither to have been but the dreams of his perturbed imagination. He, however, thought it better to yield, since, as Ugo and Bernardo attended him in the short walks he was able to take, an escape was impossible, and its attempt would but make his situation more unpleasant.

He often expressed a wish to write to Julia, but the old woman said she had orders neither to permit him to write nor receive letters — on pretence of not agitating his mind; and to avoid the consequences of despair, knives were denied him.

As Verezzi recovered, and his mind obtained that firm tone which it was wont to possess, he perceived that it was but a device of his enemies that detained him at the cottage, and his whole thoughts were now bent upon the means for effecting his escape.

It was late one evening, when, tempted by the peculiar beauty of the weather, Verezzi wandered beyond the usual limits, attended by Ugo and Bernardo, who narrowly watched his every movement. Immersed in thought, he wandered onwards, till he came to a woody eminence, whose beauty tempted him to rest a little, in a seat carved in the side of an ancient oak. Forgetful of his unhappy and dependent situation, he sat there some time, until Ugo told him that it was time to return.

In their absence, had arrived at the cottage. He had impatiently enquired for Verezzi.

“It is the baron’s custom to walk every evening,” said Bianca; “I soon expect him to return.”

Verezzi at last arrived.

Not knowing as he entered, he started back, overcome by the likeness he bore to one of the men he had seen in the cavern.

He was now convinced that all the sufferings which he had undergone in that horrible abode of misery were not imaginary, and that he was at this instant in the power of his bitterest enemy.

‘s eyes were fixed on him with an expression too manifest to be misunderstood; and with an air in which he struggled to disguise the natural malevolence of his heart, he said, that he hoped Verezzi’s health had not suffered from the evening air.

Enraged beyond measure at this hypocrisy, from a man whom he now no longer doubted to be the cause of all his misfortunes, he could not forbear inquiring for what purpose he had conveyed him hither, and told him instantly to release him.

‘s cheeks turned pale with passion, his lips quivered, his eyes darted revengeful glances, as thus he spoke: —

“Retire to your chamber, young fool, which is the fittest place for you to reflect on, and repent of, the insolence shown to one so much your superior.”

“I fear nothing,” interrupted Verezzi, “from your vain threats and empty denunciations of vengeance: justice, Heaven! is on my side, and I must eventually triumph.”

What can be a greater proof of the superiority of virtue, than that the terrible, the dauntless trembled! for he did tremble; and, conquered by the emotions of the moment, paced the circumscribed apartment with unequal steps. For an instant he shrunk within himself: he thought of his past life, and his awakened conscience reflected images of horror. But again revenge drowned the voice of virtue — again passion obscured the light of reason, and his steeled soul persisted in its scheme.

Whilst he still thought, Ugo entered. , smothering his stinging conscience, told Ugo to follow him to the heath. — Ugo obeyed.

CHAPTER III.

and Ugo proceeded along the heath, on the skirts of which stood the cottage. Verezzi leaned against the casement, when a low voice, which floated in indistinct murmurs on the silence of the evening, reached his ear. — He listened attentively. He looked into the darkness, and saw the towering form of Zastrozzi, and Ugo, whose awkward, ruffian-like gait, could never be mistaken. He could not hear their discourse, except a few detached words which reached his ears. They seemed to be denunciations of anger; a low tone afterwards succeeded, and it appeared as if a dispute, which had arisen between them, was settled: their voices at last died away in distance.

Bernardo now left the room: Bianca entered; but Verezzi plainly heard Bernardo lingering at the door.

The old woman continued sitting in silence at a remote corner of the chamber. It was Verezzi's hour for supper: — he desired Bianca to bring it. She obeyed, and brought some dried raisins in a plate. He was surprised to see a knife was likewise brought; an indulgence he imputed to the inadvertency of the old woman. — A thought started across his mind — it was now time to escape.

He seized the knife — he looked expressively at the old woman — she trembled. He advanced from the casement to the door: he called for Bernardo — Bernardo entered, and Verezzi, lifting his arm high, aimed the knife at the villain's heart. — Bernardo started aside, and the knife was fixed firmly in the doorcase. Verezzi attempted by one effort to extricate it. The effort was vain. Bianca, as fast as her tottering limbs could carry her, hastened through the opposite door, calling loudly for .

Verezzi attempted to rush through the open door, but Bernardo opposed himself to it. A long and violent contest ensued, and Bernardo's superior strength was on the point of overcoming Verezzi, when the latter, by a dexterous blow, precipitated him down the steep and narrow staircase.

Not waiting to see the event of his victory, he rushed through the opposite door, and meeting with no opposition, ran swiftly across the heath.

The moon, in tranquil majesty, hung high in air, and showed the immense extent of the plain before him. He continued rapidly advancing, and the cottage was soon out of sight. He thought that he heard ‘s voice in

every gale. Turning round, he thought Zastrozzi's eye glanced over his shoulder. — But even had Bianca taken the right road, and found Zastrozzi, Verezzi's speed would have mocked pursuit.

He ran several miles, still the dreary extent of the heath was before him: no cottage yet appeared where he might take shelter. He cast himself, for an instant, on the bank of a rivulet, which stole slowly across the heath. The moonbeam played upon its surface — he started at his own reflected image — he thought that voices were wafted on the western gale, and, nerved anew, pursued his course across the plain.

The moon had gained the zenith before Verezzi rested again. Two pine trees, of extraordinary size, stood on a small eminence: he climbed one, and found a convenient seat in its immense branches.

Fatigued, he sank to sleep.

Two hours he lay hushed in oblivion, when he was awakened by a noise. It is but the hooting of the night-raven, thought he.

Day had not yet appeared, but faint streaks in the east presaged the coming morn. Verezzi heard the clattering of hoofs — What was his horror to see that , Bernardo, and Ugo, were the horsemen! Overcome by terror, he clung to the rugged branch. His persecutors advanced to the spot — they stopped under the tree wherein he was.

"Eternal curses," exclaimed , "upon Verezzi! I swear never to rest until I find him, and then I will accomplish the purpose of my soul. — But come, Ugo, Bernardo, let us proceed."

"Signor," said Ugo, "let us the rather stop here to refresh ourselves and our horses. You, perhaps, will not make this pine your couch, but I will get up, for I think I spy an excellent bed above there."

"No, no," answered ; "did not I resolve never to rest until I had found Verezzi? Mount, villain, or die."

Ugo sullenly obeyed. They galloped off, and were quickly out of sight.

Verezzi returned thanks to Heaven for his escape; for he thought that Ugo's eye, as the villain pointed to the branch where he reposed, met his.

It was now morning. Verezzi surveyed the heath, and thought he saw buildings at a distance. Could he gain a town or city, he might defy 's power.

He descended the pine-tree, and advanced as quickly as he could towards the distant buildings. He proceeded across the heath for half an hour, and perceived that, at last, he had arrived at its termination.

The country assumed a new aspect, and the number of cottages and villas showed him that he was in the neighbourhood of some city. A large road which he now entered confirmed his opinion. He saw two peasants, and asked them where the road led.—"To Passau," was the answer.

It was yet very early in the morning, when he walked through the principal street of Passau. He felt very faint with his recent and unusual exertions; and, overcome by languor, sank on some lofty stone steps, which led to a magnificent mansion, and resting his head on his arm, soon fell asleep.

He had been there nearly an hour, when he was awakened by an old woman. She had a basket on her arm, in which were flowers, which it was her custom to bring to Passau every market-day. Hardly knowing where he was, he answered the old woman's inquiries in a vague and unsatisfactory manner. By degrees, however, they became better acquainted; and as Verezzi had no money, nor any means of procuring it, he accepted of an offer which Claudine (for that was the old woman's name) made him, to work for her, and share her cottage, which, together with a little garden, was all she could call her own. Claudine quickly disposed of her flowers, and accompanied by Verezzi, soon arrived at a little cottage near Passau. It was situated on a pleasant and cultivated spot; at the foot of a small eminence, on which it was situated, flowed the majestic Danube, and on the opposite side was a forest belonging to the Baron of Schwepper, whose vassal Claudine was.

Her little cottage was kept extremely neat; and, by the charity of the Baron, wanted none of those little comforts which old age requires.

Verezzi thought that, in so retired a spot, he might at least pass his time tranquilly, and elude .

"What induced you," said he to Claudine, as in the evening they sat before the cottage-door, "what induced you to make that offer this morning to me?"

"Ah!" said the old woman, "it was but last week that I lost my dear son, who was every thing to me: he died by a fever which he caught by his too great exertions in obtaining a livelihood for me; and I came to the market yesterday, for the first time since my son's death, hoping to find some peasant who would fill his place, when chance threw you in my way.

"I had hoped that he would have outlived me, as I am quickly hastening to the grave, to which I look forward as to the coming of a friend, who

would relieve me from those cares which, alas! but increase with my years."

Verezzi's heart was touched with compassion for the forlorn situation of Claudine. He tenderly told her that he would not forsake her; but if any opportunity occurred for ameliorating her situation, she should no longer continue in poverty.

CHAPTER IV.

But let us return to . — He had walked with Ugo on the heath, and had returned late. He was surprised to see no light in the cottage. He advanced to the door — he rapped violently — no one answered. “Very strange!” exclaimed Zastrozzi, as he burst open the door with his foot. He entered the cottage — no one was there: he searched it, and at last saw Bernardo lying, seemingly lifeless, at the foot of the staircase. Zastrozzi advanced to him, and lifted him from the ground: he had been but in a trance, and immediately recovered.

As soon as his astonishment was dissipated, he told what had happened.

“What!” exclaimed , interrupting him, “Verezzi escaped! Hell and furies! Villain, you deserve instant death; but thy life is at present necessary to me. Arise, go instantly to Rosenheim, and bring three of my horses from the inn there — make haste! begone!”

Bernardo trembling arose, and obeying ‘s commands, crossed the heath quickly towards Rosenheim, a village about half a league distant on the north.

Whilst he was gone, , agitated by contending passions, knew scarcely what to do. With hurried strides he paced the cottage. He sometimes spoke lowly to himself. The feelings of his soul flashed from his eyes — his frown was terrible.

“Would I had his heart reeking on my dagger, Signor!” said Ugo. “Kill him when you catch him, which you soon will, I am sure.”

“Ugo,” said , “you are my friend; you advise me well. — But, no! he must not die. — Ah! by what horrible fetters am I chained — fool that I was — Ugo! he shall die — die by the most hellish torments. I give myself up to fate: — I will taste revenge; for revenge is sweeter than life: and even were I to die with him, and, as the punishment of my crime, be instantly plunged into eternal torments, I should taste superior joy in recollecting the sweet moment of his destruction. O! would that destruction could be eternal!”

The clattering of hoofs was heard, and was now interrupted by the arrival of Bernardo — they instantly mounted, and the high-spirited steeds bore them swiftly across the heath.

Rapidly, for some time, were and his companions borne across the plain. They took the same road as Verezzi had. They passed the pines where he

reposed. They hurried on.

The fainting horses were scarce able to bear their guilty burthens. No one had spoken since they had left the clustered pines.

Bernardo's horse, overcome by excessive fatigue, sank on the ground; that of scarce appeared in better condition. — They stopped.

"What!" exclaimed , "must we give up the search! Ah! I am afraid we must; our horses can proceed no farther — curse on the horses.

"But let us proceed on foot — Verezzi shall not escape me — nothing shall now retard the completion of my just revenge."

As he thus spoke, 's eye gleamed with impatient revenge; and, with rapid steps, he advanced towards the south of the heath.

Day-light at length appeared; still were the villain's efforts to find Verezzi inefficient. Hunger, thirst, and fatigue, conspired to make them relinquish the pursuit — they lay at intervals upon the stony soil.

"This is but an uncomfortable couch, Signor," muttered Ugo.

, whose whole thoughts were centred in revenge, heeded him not, but nerved anew by impatient vengeance, he started from the bosom of the earth, and muttering curses upon the innocent object of his hatred, proceeded onwards. The day passed as had the morning and preceding night. Their hunger was scantily allayed by the wild berries which grew amid the heathy shrubs; and their thirst but increased by the brackish pools of water which alone they met with. They perceived a wood at some distance. "That is a likely place for Verezzi to have retired to, for the day is hot, and he must want repose as well as ourselves," said Bernardo. "True," replied Zastrozzi, as he advanced towards it. They quickly arrived at its borders: it was not a wood, but an immense forest, which stretched southward as far as Schauffhausen. They advanced into it.

The tall trees rising above their heads warded off the meridian sun; the mossy banks beneath invited repose: but , little recking a scene so fair, hastily scrutinised every recess which might afford an asylum to Verezzi.

Useless were all his researches — fruitless his endeavours: still, however, though faint with hunger, and weary with exertion, he nearly sank upon the turf. His mind was superior to corporeal toil; for that, nerved by revenge, was indefatigable.

Ugo and Bernardo, overcome by the extreme fatigue which they had undergone, and strong as the assassins were, fell fainting on the earth.

The sun began to decline; at last it sank beneath the western mountain, and the forest-tops were tinged by its departing ray. The shades of night rapidly thickened.

sat a while upon the decayed trunk of a scathed oak.

The sky was serene; the blue ether was spangled with countless myriads of stars: the tops of the lofty forest-trees waved mournfully in the evening wind; and the moon-beam penetrating at intervals, as they moved, through the matted branches, threw dubious shades upon the dark underwood beneath.

Ugo and Bernardo, conquered by irresistible torpor, sank to rest upon the dewy turf.

A scene so fair — a scene so congenial to those who can reflect upon their past lives with pleasure, and anticipate the future with the enthusiasm of innocence, ill accorded with the ferocious soul of , which at one time agitated by revenge, at another by agonising remorse, or contending passions, could derive no pleasure from the past — anticipate no happiness in futurity.

sat for some time immersed in heart-rending contemplations; but though conscience for a while reflected his past life in images of horror, again was his heart steeled by fiercest vengeance; and, aroused by images of insatiate revenge, he hastily arose, and, waking Ugo and Bernardo, pursued his course.

The night was calm and serene — not a cloud obscured the azure brilliancy of the spangled concave above — not a wind ruffled the tranquillity of the atmosphere below.

, Ugo, and Bernardo, advanced into the forest. They had tasted no food, save the wild berries of the wood, for some time, and were anxious to arrive at some cottage, where they might procure refreshments. For some time the deep silence which reigned was uninterrupted.

“What is that?” exclaimed , as he beheld a large and magnificent building, whose battlements rose above the lofty trees. It was built in the Gothic style of architecture, and appeared to be inhabited.

The building reared its pointed casements loftily to the sky: their treillaged ornaments were silvered by the clear moon-light, to which the dark shades of the arches beneath formed a striking contrast. A large portico jutted out: they advanced towards it, and attempted to open the door.

An open window on one side of the casement arrested ‘s attention. “Let us enter that,” said he. — They entered. It was a large saloon, with many windows. Every thing within was arranged with princely magnificence. — Four ancient and immense sofas in the apartment invited repose.

Near one of the windows stood a table, with an escrutoire on it; a paper lay on the ground near it.

, as he passed, heedlessly took up the paper. He advanced nearer to the window, thinking his senses had deceived him when he read, “La Contessa di Laurentini;” but they had not done so, for La Contessa di Laurentini still continued on the paper. He hastily opened it; and the letter, though of no importance, convinced him that this must have been the place to which Matilda said that she had removed.

Ugo and Bernardo lay sleeping on the sofas. , leaving them as they were, opened an opposite door — it led into a vaulted hall — a large flight of stairs rose from the opposite side — he ascended them — He advanced along a lengthened corridor — a female in white robes stood at the other end — a lamp burnt near her on the balustrade. She was in a reclining attitude, and had not observed his approach. Zastrozzi recognised her for Matilda. He approached her, and beholding Zastrozzi before her, she started back with surprise. For a while she gazed on him in silence, and at last exclaimed, “Zastrozzi! ah! are we revenged on Julia? am I happy? Answer me quickly. Well by your silence do I perceive that our plans have been put into execution. Excellent Zastrozzi! accept my most fervent thanks, my eternal gratitude.”

“Matilda!” returned , “would I could say that we were happy! but, alas! it is but misery and disappointment that causes this my so unexpected visit. I know nothing of the Marchesa di Strobazzo — less of Verezzi. I fear that I must wait till age has unstrung my now so fervent energies; and when time has damped your passion, perhaps you may gain Verezzi’s love. Julia is returned to Italy — is even now in Naples; and, secure in the immensity of her possessions, laughs at our trifling vengeance. But it shall not be always thus,” continued Zastrozzi, his eyes sparkling with inexpressible brilliancy; “I will accomplish my purpose; and, Matilda, thine shall likewise be effected. But, come, I have not tasted food for these two days.”

“Oh! supper is prepared below,” said Matilda. Seated at the supper-table, the conversation, enlivened by wine, took an animated turn. After some subjects, irrelevant to this history, being discussed, Matilda said, “Ha! but I

forgot to tell you, that I have done some good: I have secured that diabolical Paulo, Julia's servant, who was of great service to her, and, by penetrating our schemes, might have even discomfited our grand design. I have lodged him in the lowest cavern of those dungeons which are under this building — will you go and see him?" answered in the affirmative, and seizing a lamp which burnt in a recess of the apartment, followed Matilda.

The rays of the lamp but partially dissipated the darkness as they advanced through the antiquated passages. They arrived at a door: Matilda opened it, and they quickly crossed a grass-grown court-yard.

The grass which grew on the lofty battlements waved mournfully in the rising blast, as Matilda and entered a dark and narrow casement. — Cautiously they descended the slippery and precipitous steps. The lamp, obscured by the vapours, burnt dimly as they advanced. They arrived at the foot of the staircase. "Zastrozzi!" exclaimed Matilda. Zastrozzi turned quickly, and, perceiving a door, obeyed Matilda's directions.

On some straw, chained to the wall, lay Paulo.

"O pity! stranger, pity!" exclaimed the miserable Paulo.

No answer, save a smile of most expressive scorn, was given by . They again ascended the narrow staircase, and, passing the court-yard, arrived at the supper-room.

"But," said , again taking his seat, "what use is that fellow Paulo in the dungeon? why do you keep him there?"

"Oh!" answered Matilda, "I know not; but if you wish" —

She paused, but her eye expressively filled up the sentence.

poured out an overflowing goblet of wine. He summoned Ugo and Bernardo—"Take that," said Matilda, presenting them a key — One of the villains took it, and in a few moments returned with the hapless Paulo.

"Paulo!" exclaimed loudly, "I have prevailed on La Contessa to restore your freedom: here," added he, "take this; I pledge you to your future happiness."

Paulo bowed low — he drank the poisoned potion to the dregs, and, overcome by sudden and irresistible faintness, fell at 's feet. Sudden convulsions shook his frame, his lips trembled, his eyes rolled horribly, and, uttering an agonised and lengthened groan, he expired.

"Ugo! Bernardo! take that body and bury it immediately," cried . "There, Matilda, by such means must Julia die: you see, that the poisons which I possess are quick in their effect."

A pause ensued, during which the eyes of and Matilda spoke volumes to each guilty soul.

The silence was interrupted by Matilda. Not shocked at the dreadful outrage which had been committed, she told to come out into the forest, for that she had something for his private ear.

“Matilda,” said , as they advanced along the forest, “I must not stay here, and waste moments in inactivity, which might be more usefully employed: I must quit you to-morrow — I must destroy Julia.”

“,” returned Matilda, “I am so far from wishing you to spend your time here in ignoble listlessness, that I will myself join your search. You shall to Italy — to Naples — watch Julia’s every movement, attend her every step, and in the guise of a friend destroy her: but beware, whilst you assume the softness of the dove, to forget not the cunning of the serpent. On you I depend for destroying her, my own exertions shall find Verezzi; I myself will gain his love — Julia must die, and expiate the crime of daring to rival me, with her hated blood.”

Whilst thus they conversed, whilst they planned these horrid schemes of destruction, the night wore away.

The moon-beam darting her oblique rays from under volumes of louring vapour, threatened an approaching storm. The lurid sky was tinged with a yellowish lustre — the forest-tops rustled in the rising tempest — big drops fell — a flash of lightning, and, instantly after, a peal of bursting thunder, struck with sudden terror the bosom of Matilda. She, however, immediately overcame it, and regarding the battling element with indifference, continued her discourse with .

They wore out the night in many visionary plans for the future, and now and then a gleam of remorse assailed Matilda’s heart. Heedless of the storm, they had remained in the forest late. Flushed with wickedness, they at last sought their respective couches, but sleep forsook their pillow.

In all the luxuriance of extravagant fancy, Matilda portrayed the symmetrical form, the expressive countenance, of Verezzi; whilst , who played a double part, anticipated, with ferocious exultation, the torments which he she loved was eventually fated to endure, and changed his plan, for a sublimer mode of vengeance was opened to his view.

Matilda passed a night of restlessness and agitation: her mind was harassed by contending passions, and her whole soul wound up to deeds of horror and wickedness. ‘s countenance, as she met him in the breakfast-

parlour, wore a settled expression of determined revenge—”I almost shudder,” exclaimed Matilda, “at the sea of wickedness on which I am about to embark! But still, Verezzi — ah! for him would I even lose my hopes of eternal happiness. In the sweet idea of calling him mine, no scrupulous delicacy, no mistaken superstitious fear, shall prevent me from deserving him by daring acts — No! I am resolved,” continued Matilda, as, recollecting his graceful form, her soul was assailed by tenfold love —

“And I am likewise resolved,” said ; “I am resolved on revenge — my revenge shall be gratified. Julia shall die, and Verezzi—”

paused; his eye gleamed with a peculiar expression, and Matilda thought he meant more than he had said — she raised her eyes — they encountered his.

The guilt-bronzed cheek of was tinged with a momentary blush, but it quickly passed away, and his countenance recovered its wonted firm and determined expression.

“!” exclaimed Matilda,—”should you be false — should you seek to deceive me — But, no, it is impossible. — Pardon, my friend — I meant not what I said — my thoughts are crazed—”

“Tis well,” said , haughtily.

“But you forgive my momentary, unmeaning doubt?” said Matilda, and fixed her unmeaning eyes on his countenance.

“It is not for us to dwell on vain, unmeaning expressions, which the soul dictates not,” returned ; “and I sue for pardon from you, for having, by ambiguous expressions, caused the least agitation: but, believe me, Matilda, we will not forsake each other; your cause is mine; distrust between us is foolish. — But, farewell for the present; I must order Bernardo to go to Passau, to purchase horses.”

The day passed on; each waited with impatience for the arrival of Bernardo.—”Farewell, Matilda,” exclaimed , as he mounted the horses which Bernardo brought; and, taking the route of Italy, galloped off.

CHAPTER V.

Her whole soul wrapped up in one idea, the guilty Matilda threw herself into a chariot which waited at the door, and ordered the equipage to proceed towards Passau.

Left to indulge reflection in solitude, her mind recurred to the object nearest her heart — to Verezzi.

Her bosom was scorched by an ardent and unquenchable fire; and while she thought of him, she even shuddered at the intenseness of her own sensations.

“He shall love me — he shall be mine — mine for ever,” mentally ejaculated Matilda.

The streets of Passau echoed to La Contessa di Laurentini’s equipage, before, roused from her reverie, she found herself at the place of destination; and she was seated in her hotel in that city, before she had well arranged her unsettled ideas. She summoned Ferdinand, a trusty servant, to whom she confided every thing.—”Ferdinand,” said she, “you have many claims on my gratitude: I have never had cause to reproach you with infidelity in executing my purposes — add another debt to that which I already owe you: find Il Conte Verezzi within three days, and you are my best friend.” Ferdinand bowed, and prepared to execute her commands. Two days passed, during which Matilda failed not to make every personal inquiry, even in the suburbs of Passau.

Alternately depressed by fear, and revived by hope, for three days was Matilda’s mind in a state of disturbance and fluctuation. The evening of the third day, of the day on which Ferdinand was to return, arrived. Matilda’s mind, wound up to the extreme of impatience, was the scene of conflicting passions. — She paced the room rapidly.

A servant entered, and announced supper.

“Is Ferdinand returned?” hastily inquired Matilda.

The domestic answered in the negative. — She sighed deeply, and struck her forehead.

Footsteps were heard in the antichamber without.

“There is Ferdinand!” exclaimed Matilda, exultingly, as he entered —”Well, well! have you found Verezzi? Ah! speak quickly! ease me of this horrible suspense.”

“Signora!” said Ferdinand, “it grieves me much to be obliged to declare, that all my endeavours have been inefficient to find Il Conte Verezzi — .”

“Oh, madness! madness!” exclaimed Matilda; “is it for this that I have plunged into the dark abyss of crime? — is it for this that I have despised the delicacy of my sex, and, braving consequences, have offered my love to one who despises me — who shuns me, as does the barbarous Verezzi? But if he is in Passau — if he is in the environs of the city, I will find him.”

Thus saying, despising the remonstrances of her domestics, casting off all sense of decorum, she rushed into the streets of Passau. A gloomy silence reigned through the streets of the city; it was past midnight, and every inhabitant seemed to be sunk in sleep — sleep which Matilda was almost a stranger to. Her white robes floated on the night air — her shadowy and dishevelled hair flew over her form, which, as she passed the bridge, seemed to strike the boatmen below with the idea of some supernatural and ethereal form.

She hastily crossed the bridge — she entered the fields on the right — the Danube, whose placid stream was scarcely agitated by the wind, reflected her symmetrical form, as, scarcely knowing what direction she pursued, Matilda hastened along its banks. Sudden horror, resistless despair, seized her brain, maddened as it was by hopeless love.

“What have I to do in this world, my fairest prospect blighted, my fondest hope rendered futile?” exclaimed the frantic Matilda, as, wound up to the highest pitch of desperation, she attempted to plunge herself into the river.

But life fled; for Matilda, caught by a stranger’s arm, was prevented from the desperate act.

Overcome by horror, she fainted.

Some time did she lie in a state of torpid insensibility, till the stranger, filling his cap with water from the river, and sprinkling her pallid countenance with it, recalled to life the miserable Matilda.

What was her surprise, what was her mingled emotion of rapture and doubt, when the moon-beam disclosed to her view the countenance of Verezzi, as in anxious solicitude he bent over her elegantly-proportioned form!

“By what chance,” exclaimed the surprised Verezzi, “do I see here La Contessa di Laurentini? did not I leave you at your Italian castella? I had

hoped you would have ceased to persecute me, when I told you that I was irrevocably another's."

"Oh, Verezzi!" exclaimed Matilda, casting herself at his feet, "I adore you to madness — I love you to distraction. If you have one spark of compassion, let me not sue in vain — reject not one who feels it impossible to overcome the fatal, resistless passion which consumes her."

"Rise, Signora," returned Verezzi—"rise; this discourse is improper — it is not suiting the dignity of your rank, or the delicacy of your sex: but suffer me to conduct you to yon cottage, where, perhaps, you may deign to refresh yourself, or pass the night."

The moon-beams played upon the tranquil waters of the Danube, as Verezzi silently conducted the beautiful Matilda to the humble dwelling where he resided.

Claudine waited at the door, and had begun to fear that some mischance had befallen Verezzi, as, when he arrived at the cottage-door, it was long past his usual hour of return.

It was his custom, during those hours when the twilight of evening cools the air, to wander through the adjacent rich scenery, though he seldom prolonged his walks till midnight.

He supported the fainting form of Matilda as he advanced towards Claudine. The old woman's eyes had lately failed her, from extreme age; and it was not until Verezzi called to her that she saw him, accompanied by La Contessa di Laurentini.

"Claudine," said Verezzi, "I have another claim upon your kindness: this lady, who has wandered beyond her knowledge, will honour our cottage so far as to pass the night here. If you would prepare the pallet which I usually occupy for her, I will repose this evening on the turf, and will now get supper ready. Signora," continued he, addressing Matilda, "some wine would, I think, refresh your spirits; permit me to fill you a glass of wine."

Matilda silently accepted his offer — their eyes met — those of Matilda were sparkling and full of meaning.

"Verezzi!" exclaimed Matilda, "I arrived but four days since at Passau — I have eagerly inquired for you — oh! how eagerly! — Will you accompany me to-morrow to Passau?"

"Yes," said Verezzi, hesitatingly.

Claudine soon joined them. Matilda exulted in the success of her schemes, and Claudine being present, the conversation took a general turn.

The lateness of the hour, at last, warned them to separate.

Verezzi, left to solitude and his own reflections, threw himself on the turf, which extended to the Danube below. — Ideas of the most gloomy nature took possession of his soul; and, in the event of the evening, he saw the foundation of the most bitter misfortunes.

He could not love Matilda; and though he never had seen her but in the most amiable light, he found it impossible to feel any sentiment towards her, save cold esteem. Never had he beheld those dark shades in her character, which, if developed, could excite nothing but horror and detestation: he regarded her as a woman of strong passions, who, having resisted them to the utmost of her power, was at last borne away in the current — whose brilliant virtues one fault had obscured — as such he pitied her: but still could he not help observing a comparison between her and Julia, whose feminine delicacy shrunk from the slightest suspicion, even of indecorum. Her fragile form, her mild heavenly countenance, was contrasted with all the partiality of love, to the scintillating eye, the commanding countenance, the bold expressive gaze, of Matilda.

He must accompany her on the morrow to Passau. — During their walk, he determined to observe a strict silence; or, at all events, not to hazard one equivocal expression, which might be construed into what it was not meant for.

The night passed away — morning came, and the tops of the far-seen mountains were gilded by the rising sun.

Exulting in the success of her schemes, and scarcely able to disguise the vivid feelings of her heart, the wily Matilda, as early she descended to the narrow parlour, where Claudine had prepared a simple breakfast, affected a gloom she was far from feeling.

An unequivocal expression of innocent and mild tenderness marked her manner towards Verezzi: her eyes were cast on the ground, and her every movement spoke meekness and sensibility.

At last, breakfast being finished, the time arrived when Matilda, accompanied by Verezzi, pursued the course of the river, to retrace her footsteps to Passau. A gloomy silence for some time prevailed — at last Matilda spoke.

“Unkind Verezzi! is it thus that you will ever slight me? is it for this that I have laid aside the delicacy of my sex, and owned to you a passion which

was but too violent to be concealed? — Ah! at least pity me! I love you: oh! I adore you to madness!"

She paused — the peculiar expression which beamed in her dark eye, told the tumultuous wishes of her bosom.

"Distress not yourself and me, Signora," said Verezzi, "by these unavailing protestations. Is it for you — is it for Matilda," continued he, his countenance assuming a smile of bitterest scorn, "to talk of love to the lover of Julia?"

Rapid tears coursed down Matilda's cheek. She sighed — the sigh seemed to rend her inmost bosom.

So unexpected a reply conquered Verezzi. He had been prepared for reproaches, but his feelings could not withstand Matilda's tears.

"Ah! forgive me, Signora," exclaimed Verezzi, "if my brain, crazed by disappointments, dictated words which my heart intended not."

"Oh!" replied Matilda, "it is I who am wrong: led on by the violence of my passion, I have uttered words, the bare recollection of which fills me with horror. Oh! forgive, forgive an unhappy woman, whose only fault is loving you too well."

As thus she spoke, they entered the crowded streets of Passau, and, proceeding rapidly onwards, soon arrived at La Contessa di Laurentini's hotel.

CHAPTER VI.

The character of Matilda has been already so far revealed, as to render it unnecessary to expatiate upon it farther. Suffice it to say, that her syren illusions, and well-timed blandishments, obtained so great a power over the imagination of Verezzi, that his resolution to return to Claudine's cottage before sun-set became every instant fainter and fainter.

"And will you thus leave me?" exclaimed Matilda, in accents of the bitterest anguish, as Verezzi prepared to depart—"will you thus leave unnoticed, her who, for your sake alone, casting aside the pride of high birth, has wandered, unknown, through foreign climes? Oh! if I have (led away by love for you) outstepped the bounds of modesty, let me not, oh! let me not be injured by others with impunity. Stay, I entreat thee, Verezzi, if yet one spark of compassion lingers in your breast — stay and defend me from those who vainly seek one who is irrevocably thine."

With words such as these did the wily Matilda work upon the generous passions of Verezzi. Emotions of pity, of compassion, for one whose only fault he supposed to be love for him, conquered Verezzi's softened soul.

"Oh! Matilda," said he, "though I cannot love thee — though my soul is irrevocably another's — yet, believe me, I esteem, I admire thee; and it grieves me that a heart, fraught with so many and so brilliant virtues, has fixed itself on one who is incapable of appreciating its value."

The time passed away, and each returning sun beheld Verezzi still at Passau — still under Matilda's proof. That softness, that melting tenderness, which she knew so well how to assume, began to convince Verezzi of the injustice of the involuntary hatred which had filled his soul towards her. Her conversation was fraught with sense and elegant ideas. She played to him in the cool of the evening; and often, after sun-set, they rambled together into the rich scenery and luxuriant meadows which are washed by the Danube.

Claudine was not forgotten: indeed, Matilda first recollected her, and, by placing her in an independent situation, added a new claim to the gratitude of Verezzi.

In this manner three weeks passed away. Every day did Matilda practise new arts, employ new blandishments, to detain under her roof the fascinated Verezzi.

The most select parties in Passau, flitted in varied movements to exquisite harmony, when Matilda perceived Verezzi's spirits to be ruffled by recollection.

When he seemed to prefer solitude, a moonlight walk by the Danube was proposed by Matilda; or, with skilful fingers, she drew from her harp sounds of the most heart-touching, most enchanting melody. Her behaviour towards him was soft, tender, and quiet, and might rather have characterised the mild, serene love of a friend or sister, than the ardent, unquenchable fire, which burnt, though concealed, within Matilda's bosom.

It was one calm evening that Matilda and Verezzi sat in a back saloon, which overlooked the gliding Danube. Verezzi was listening, with all the enthusiasm of silent rapture, to a favourite soft air which Matilda sang, when a loud rap at the hall door startled them. A domestic entered, and told Matilda that a stranger, on particular business, waited to speak with her.

"Oh!" exclaimed Matilda, "I cannot attend to him now; bid him wait."

The stranger was impatient, and would not be denied.

"Desire him to come in, then," said Matilda.

The domestic hastened to obey her commands.

Verezzi had arisen to leave the room. "No," cried Matilda, "sit still; I shall soon dismiss the fellow; besides, I have no secrets from you." Verezzi took his seat.

The wide folding-doors which led into the passage were open.

Verezzi observed Matilda, as she gazed fixedly through them, to grow pale.

He could not see the cause, as he was seated on a sofa at the other end of the saloon.

Suddenly she started from her seat — her whole frame seemed convulsed by agitation, as she rushed through the door.

Verezzi heard an agitated voice exclaim, "Go! go! to-morrow morning!"

Matilda returned — she seated herself again at the harp which she had quitted, and essayed to compose herself; but it was in vain — she was too much agitated.

Her voice, as she again attempted to sing, refused to perform its office; and her humid hands, as they swept the strings of the harp, violently trembled.

"Matilda," said Verezzi, in a sympathising tone, "what has agitated you? Make me a repository of your sorrows: I would, if possible, alleviate them."

“Oh no,” said Matilda, affecting unconcern; “nothing — nothing has happened. I was even myself unconscious that I appeared agitated.”

Verezzi affected to believe her, and assumed a composure which he felt not. The conversation changed, and Matilda assumed her wonted mien. The lateness of the hour at last warned them to separate.

The more Verezzi thought upon the evening’s occurrence, the more did a conviction in his mind, inexplicable even to himself, strengthen, that Matilda’s agitation originated in something of consequence. He knew her mind to be superior to common circumstance and fortuitous casualty, which might have ruffled an inferior soul. Besides, the words which he had heard her utter—”Go! go! to-morrow morning!” — and though he resolved to disguise his real sentiments, and seem to let the subject drop, he determined narrowly to scrutinise Matilda’s conduct; and, particularly, to know what took place on the following morning. — An indefinable presentiment that something horrible was about to occur, filled Verezzi’s mind. A long chain of retrospection ensued — he could not forget the happy hours which he had passed with Julia; her interesting softness, her ethereal form, pressed on his aching sense.

Still did he feel his soul irresistibly softened towards Matilda — her love for him flattered his vanity; and though he could not feel reciprocal affection towards her, yet her kindness in rescuing him from his former degraded situation, her altered manner towards him, and her unremitting endeavours to please, to humour him in every thing, called for his warmest, his sincerest gratitude.

The morning came — Verezzi arose from a sleepless couch, and descending into the breakfast-parlour, there found Matilda.

He endeavoured to appear the same as usual, but in vain; for an expression of reserve and scrutiny was apparent on his features.

Matilda perceived it, and shrunk abashed from his keen gaze.

The meal passed away in silence.

“Excuse me for an hour or two,” at last stammered out Matilda—”my steward has accounts to settle;” and she left the apartment.

Verezzi had now no doubt but that the stranger, who had caused Matilda’s agitation the day before, was now returned to finish his business.

He moved towards the door to follow her — he stopped.

What right have I to pry into the secrets of another? thought Verezzi: besides, the business which this stranger has with Matilda cannot possibly

concern me.

Still was he compelled, by an irresistible fascination, as it were, to unravel what appeared to him so mysterious an affair. He endeavoured to believe it to be as she affirmed; he endeavoured to compose himself: he took a book, but his eyes wandered insensibly.

Thrice he hesitated — thrice he shut the door of the apartment; till at last, a curiosity, unaccountable even to himself, propelled him to seek Matilda.

Mechanically he moved along the passage. He met one of the domestics — he inquired where Matilda was.

“In the grand saloon,” was the reply.

With trembling steps he advanced towards it — The folding-doors were open — He saw Matilda and the stranger standing at the remote end of the apartment.

The stranger’s figure, which was towering and majestic, was rendered more peculiarly striking, by the elegantly proportioned form of Matilda, who leant on a marble table near her; and her gestures, as she conversed with him, manifested the most eager impatience, the deepest interest.

CHAPTER VII.

At so great a distance, Verezzi could not hear their conversation; but, by the low murmurs which occasionally reached his ear, he perceived that, whatever it might be, they were both equally interested in the subject.

For some time he contemplated them with mingled surprise and curiosity — he tried to arrange the confused murmurs of their voices, which floated along the immense and vaulted apartment, but no articulate sound reached his ear.

At last Matilda took the stranger's hand: she pressed it to her lips with an eager and impassioned gesture, and led him to the opposite door of the saloon.

Suddenly the stranger turned, but as quickly regained his former position, as he retreated through the door; not quickly enough, however, but, in the stranger's fire-darting eye, Verezzi recognised him who had declared eternal enmity at the cottage on the heath.

Scarcely knowing where he was, or what to believe, for a few moments Verezzi stood bewildered, and unable to arrange the confusion of ideas which floated in his brain, and assailed his terror-struck imagination. He knew not what to believe — what phantom it could be that, in the shape of , blasted his straining eye-balls — Could it really be Zastrozzi? Could his most rancorous, his bitterest enemy, be thus beloved, thus confided in, by the perfidious Matilda?

For several moments he stood doubting what he should resolve upon. At one while he determined to reproach Matilda with treachery and baseness, and overwhelm her in the mid career of wickedness; but at last concluding it to be more politic to dissemble and subdue his emotions, he went into the breakfast-parlour which he had left, and seated himself as if nothing had happened, at a drawing which he had left incomplete.

Besides, perhaps Matilda might not be guilty — perhaps she was deceived; and though some scheme of villany and destruction to himself was preparing, she might be the dupe, and not the coadjutor, of . The idea that she was innocent soothed him; for he was anxious to make up, in his own mind, for the injustice which he had been guilty of towards her: and though he could not conquer the disgusting ideas, the unaccountable detestations, which often, in spite of himself, filled his soul towards her, he

was willing to overcome what he considered but as an illusion of the imagination, and to pay that just tribute of esteem to her virtues which they demanded.

Whilst these ideas, although confused and unconnected, passed in Verezzi's brain, Matilda again entered the apartment.

Her countenance exhibited the strongest marks of agitation, and full of inexpressible and confused meaning was her dark eye, as she addressed some trifling question to Verezzi, in a hurried accent, and threw herself into a chair beside him.

"Verezzi!" exclaimed Matilda, after a pause equally painful to both —"Verezzi! I am deeply grieved to be the messenger of bad news — willingly would I withhold the fatal truth from you; yet, by some other means, it may meet your unprepared ear. I have something dreadful, shocking, to relate: can you bear the recital?"

The nerveless fingers of Verezzi dropped the pencil — he seized Matilda's hand, and, in accents almost inarticulate from terror, conjured her to explain her horrid surmises.

"Oh! my friend! my sister!" exclaimed Matilda, as well-feigned tears coursed down her cheeks,—"oh! she is—"

"What! what!" interrupted Verezzi, as the idea of something having befallen his adored Julia filled his maddened brain with tenfold horror: for often had Matilda declared, that since she could not become his wife, she would willingly be his friend, and had even called Julia her sister.

"Oh!" exclaimed Matilda, hiding her face in her hands, "Julia — Julia — whom you love, is dead."

Unable to withhold his fleeting faculties from a sudden and chilly horror which seized them, Verezzi sank forward, and, fainting, fell at Matilda's feet.

In vain, for some time, was every effort to recover him. Every restorative which was administered, for a long time, was unavailing: at last his lips unclosed — he seemed to take his breath easier — he moved — he slowly opened his eyes.

CHAPTER VIII.

His head reposed upon Matilda's bosom; he started from it violently, as if stung by a scorpion, and fell upon the floor. His eyes rolled horribly, and seemed as if starting from their sockets.

"Is she then dead? is Julia dead?" in accents scarcely articulate exclaimed Verezzi. "Ah, Matilda! was it you then who destroyed her? was it by thy jealous hand that she sank to an untimely grave? — Ah, Matilda! Matilda! say that she yet lives! Alas! what have I to do in this world without Julia? — an empty uninteresting void."

Every word uttered by the hapless Verezzi spoke daggers to the agitated Matilda.

Again overpowered by the acuteness of his sensations, he sank on the floor, and, in violent convulsions, he remained bereft of sense.

Matilda again raised him — again laid his throbbing head upon her bosom. — Again, as recovering, the wretched Verezzi perceived his situation — overcome by agonising reflection, he relapsed into insensibility.

One fit rapidly followed another, and at last, in a state of the wildest delirium, he was conveyed to bed.

Matilda found, that a too eager impatience had carried her too far. She had prepared herself for violent grief, but not for the paroxysms of madness which now seemed really to have seized the brain of the devoted Verezzi.

She sent for a physician — he arrived, and his opinion of Verezzi's danger almost drove the wretched Matilda to desperation.

Exhausted by contending passions, she threw herself on a sofa: she thought of the deeds which she had perpetrated to gain Verezzi's love; she considered that, should her purpose be defeated, at the very instant which her heated imagination had portrayed as the commencement of her triumph; should all the wickedness, all the crimes, into which she had plunged herself, be of no avail — this idea, more than remorse for her enormities, affected her.

She sat for a time absorbed in a confusion of contending thought: her mind was the scene of anarchy and horror: at last, exhausted by their own violence, a deep, a desperate calm took possession of her faculties. She started from the sofa, and, maddened by the idea of Verezzi's danger, sought his apartment.

On a bed lay Verezzi.

A thick film overspread his eye, and he seemed sunk in insensibility.

Matilda approached him — she pressed her burning lips to his — she took his hand — it was cold, and at intervals slightly agitated by convulsions.

A deep sigh, at this instant, burst from his lips — a momentary hectic flushed his cheek, as the miserable Verezzi attempted to rise.

Matilda, though almost too much agitated to command her emotions, threw herself into a chair behind the curtain, and prepared to watch his movements.

"Julia! Julia!" exclaimed he, starting from the bed, as his flaming eye-balls were unconsciously fixed upon the agitated Matilda, "where art thou? Ah! thy fair form now moulders in the dark sepulchre! would I were laid beside thee! thou art now an ethereal spirit!" and then, in a seemingly triumphant accent, he added, "But, ere long, I will seek thy unspotted soul — ere long I will again clasp my lost Julia!" Overcome by resistless delirium, he was for an instant silent — his starting eyes seemed to follow some form, which imagination had portrayed in vacuity. He dashed his head against the wall, and sank, overpowered by insensibility, on the floor.

Accustomed as she was to scenes of horror, and firm and dauntless as was Matilda's soul, yet this was too much to behold with composure. She rushed towards him, and lifted him from the floor. In a delirium of terror, she wildly called for help. Unconscious of every thing around her, she feared Verezzi had destroyed himself. She clasped him to her bosom, and called on his name, in an ecstasy of terror.

The domestics, alarmed by her exclamations, rushed in. Once again they lifted the insensible Verezzi into the bed — every spark of life seemed now to have been extinguished; for the transport of horror which had torn his soul was almost too much to be sustained. A physician was again sent for — Matilda, maddened by desperation, in accents almost inarticulate from terror, demanded hope or despair from the physician.

He, who was a man of sense, declared his opinion, that Verezzi would speedily recover, though he knew not the event which might take place in the crisis of the disorder, which now rapidly approached.

The remonstrances of those around her were unavailing, to draw Matilda from the bed-side of Verezzi.

She sat there, a prey to disappointed passion, silent, and watching every turn of the hapless Verezzi's countenance, as, bereft of sense, he lay extended on the bed before her.

The animation which was wont to illumine his sparkling eye was fled: the roseate colour which had tinged his cheek had given way to an ashy paleness-he was insensible to all around him. Matilda sat there the whole day, and silently administered medicines to the unconscious Verezzi, as occasion required.

Towards night, the physician again came. Matilda's head thoughtfully leant upon her arm as he entered the apartment.

"Ah, what hope? what hope?" wildly she exclaimed.

The physician calmed her, and bid her not despair: then observing her pallid countenance, he said, he believed she required his skill as much as his patient.

"Oh! heed me not," she exclaimed; "but how is Verezzi? will he live or die?"

The physician advanced towards the emaciated Verezzi — he took his hand.

A burning fever raged through his veins.

"Oh, how is he?" exclaimed Matilda, as, anxiously watching the humane physician's countenance, she thought a shade of sorrow spread itself over his features—"but tell me my fate quickly," continued she: "I am prepared to hear the worst — prepared to hear that he is even dead already."

As she spoke this, a sort of desperate serenity overspread her features — she seized the physician's arm, and looked steadfastly on his countenance, and then, as if overcome by unwonted exertions, she sank fainting at his feet.

The physician raised her, and soon succeeded in recalling her fleeted faculties.

Overcome by its own violence, Matilda's despair became softened, and the words of the physician operated as a balm upon her soul, and bid her feel hope.

She again resumed her seat, and waited with smothered impatience for the event of the decisive crisis, which the physician could now no longer conceal.

She pressed his burning hand in hers, and waited, with apparent composure, for eleven o'clock.

Slowly the hours passed — the clock of Passau tolled each lingering quarter as they rolled away, and hastened towards the appointed time, when the chamberdoor of Verezzi was slowly opened by Ferdinand.

“Ha! why do you disturb me now?” exclaimed Matilda, whom the entrance of Ferdinand had roused from a profound reverie.

“Signora!” whispered Ferdinand—”Signor waits below: he wishes to see you there.”

“Ah!” said Matilda thoughtfully, “conduct him here.”

Ferdinand departed to obey her — footsteps were heard in the passage, and immediately afterwards stood before Matilda.

“Matilda!” exclaimed he, “why do I see you here? what accident has happened which confines you to this chamber?”

“Ah!” replied Matilda, in an undervoice, “look in that bed — behold Verezzi! emaciated and insensible — in a quarter of an hour, perhaps, all animation will be fled — fled for ever!” continued she, as a deeper expression of despair shaded her beautiful features.

advanced to the foot of the bed — Verezzi lay, as if dead, before his eyes; for the ashy hue of his lips, and his sunken inexpressive eye, almost declared that his spirit was fled.

gazed upon him with an indefinable expression of insatiated vengeance — indefinable to Matilda, as she gazed upon the expressive countenance of her coadjutor in crime.

“Matilda! I want you; come to the lower saloon; I have something to speak to you of,” said .

“Oh! if it concerned my soul’s eternal happiness, I could not now attend,” exclaimed Matilda, energetically: “in less than a quarter of an hour, perhaps, all I hold dear on earth will be dead; with him, every hope, every wish, every tie which binds me to earth. Oh!” exclaimed she, her voice assuming a tone of extreme horror, “see how pale he looks!”

bade Matilda farewell, and went away.

The physician yet continued watching, in silence, the countenance of Verezzi: it still retained its unchanging expression of fixed despair.

Matilda gazed upon it, and waited with the most eager, yet subdued impatience, for the expiration of the few minutes which yet remained — she still gazed.

The features of Verezzi’s countenance were slightly convulsed.

The clock struck eleven.

His lips unclosed — Matilda turned pale with terror; yet mute, and absorbed by expectation, remained rooted to her seat.

She raised her eyes, and hope again returned, as she beheld the countenance of the humane physician lighted up with a beam of pleasure.

She could no longer contain herself, but, in an ecstasy of pleasure, as excessive as her grief and horror before had been violent, in rapid and hurried accents questioned the physician. The physician, with an expressive smile, pressed his finger on his lip. She understood the movement; and, though her heart was dilated with sudden and excessive delight, she smothered her joy, as she had before her grief, and gazed with rapturous emotion on the countenance of Verezzi, as, to her expectant eyes, a blush of animation tinged his before-pallid countenance. Matilda took his hand — the pulses yet beat with feverish violence. She gazed upon his countenance — the film, which before had overspread his eye, disappeared: returning expression pervaded its orbit, but it was the expression of deep, of rooted grief.

The physician made a sign to Matilda to withdraw.

She drew the curtain before her, and, in anxious expectation, awaited the event.

A deep, a long-drawn sigh, at last burst from Verezzi's bosom. He raised himself — his eyes seemed to follow some form, which imagination had portrayed in the remote obscurity of the apartment, for the shades of night were but partially dissipated by a lamp which burnt on a table behind. He raised his almost nerveless arm, and passed it across his eyes, as if to convince himself, that what he saw was not an illusion of the imagination. He looked at the physician, who sat near to and silent by the bedside, and patiently awaited whatever event that might occur.

Verezzi slowly arose, and violently exclaimed, "Julia! Julia! my long-lost Julia, come!" And then, more collectedly, he added, in a mournful tone, "Ah no! you are dead; lost, lost for ever!"

He turned round, and saw the physician, but Matilda was still concealed.

"Where am I?" inquired Verezzi, addressing the physician. "Safe, safe," answered he: "compose yourself; all will be well."

"Ah, but Julia?" inquired Verezzi, with a tone so expressive of despair, as threatened returning delirium.

"Oh! compose yourself," said the humane physician: "you have been very ill: this is but an illusion of the imagination; and even now, I fear, that

you labour under that delirium which attends a brain-fever."

Verezzi's nerveless frame again sunk upon the bed — still his eyes were open, and fixed upon vacancy: he seemed to be endeavouring to arrange the confusion of ideas which pressed upon his brain.

Matilda undrew the curtain; but, as her eye met the physician's, his glance told her to place it in its original situation.

As she thought of the events of the day her heart was dilated by tumultuous, yet pleasurable emotions. She conjectured, that were Verezzi to recover, of which she now entertained but little doubt, she might easily erase from his heart the boyish passion which before had possessed it; might convince him of the folly of supposing that a first attachment is fated to endure for ever; and, by unremitting assiduity in pleasing him — by soft, quiet attentions, and an affected sensibility, might at last acquire the attainment of that object, for which her bosom had so long and so ardently panted.

Soothed by these ideas, and willing to hear from the physician's mouth a more explicit affirmation of Verezzi's safety than his looks had given, Matilda rose, for the first time since his illness, and, unseen by Verezzi, approached the physician.—"Follow me to the saloon," said Matilda.

The physician obeyed, and, by his fervent assurances of Verezzi's safety and speedy recovery, confirmed Matilda's fluctuating hopes. "But," added the physician, "though my patient will recover if his mind be unruffled, I will not answer for his re-establishment should he see you, as his disorder, being wholly on the mind, may be possibly augmented by—"

The physician paused, and left Matilda to finish the sentence; for he was a man of penetration and judgement, and conjectured that some sudden and violent emotion, of which she was the cause, occasioned his patient's illness. This conjecture became certainty, as, when he concluded, he observed Matilda's face change to an ashy paleness.

"May I not watch him — attend him?" inquired Matilda imploringly.

"No," answered the physician: "in the weakened state in which he now is, the sight of you might cause immediate dissolution."

Matilda started, as if overcome by horror at the bare idea, and promised to obey his commands.

The morning came — Matilda arose from a sleepless couch, and with hopes yet unconfirmed sought Verezzi's apartment.

She stood near the door, listening. — Her heart palpitated with tremulous violence, as she listened to Verezzi's breathing — every sound from within alarmed her. At last she slowly opened the door, and, though adhering to the physician's directions in not suffering Verezzi to see her, she could not deny herself the pleasure of watching him, and busying herself in little offices about his apartment.

She could hear Verezzi question the attendant collectedly, yet as a person who was ignorant where he was, and knew not the events which had immediately preceded his present state.

At last he sank into a deep sleep — Matilda now dared to gaze on him: the hectic colour which had flushed his cheek was fled, but the ashy hue of his lips had given place to a brilliant vermilion — She gazed intently on his countenance.

A heavenly, yet faint smile, diffused itself over his countenance — his hand slightly moved.

Matilda, fearing that he would awake, again concealed herself. She was mistaken; for, on looking again, he still slept.

She still gazed upon his countenance. The visions of his sleep were changed, for tears came fast from under his eyelids, and a deep sigh burst from his bosom.

Thus passed several days: Matilda still watched, with most affectionate assiduity, by the bedside of the unconscious Verezzi.

The physician declared that his patient's mind was yet in too irritable a state to permit him to see Matilda, but that he was convalescent.

One evening she sat by his bedside, and gazing upon the features of the sleeping Verezzi, felt unusual softness take possession of her soul — an indefinable and tumultuous emotion shook her bosom — her whole frame thrilled with rapturous ecstasy, and seizing the hand, which lay motionless beside her, she imprinted on it a thousand burning kisses.

"Ah, Julia! Julia! is it you?" exclaimed Verezzi, as he raised his enfeebled frame; but perceiving his mistake, as he cast his eyes on Matilda, sank back, and fainted.

Matilda hastened with restoratives, and soon succeeded in recalling to life Verezzi's fleeted faculties.

CHAPTER IX.

Art thou afraid
To be the same in thine own act and valour
As thou art in desire? would'st thou have that
Which thou esteemest the ornament of life.
Or live a coward in thine own esteem.
Letting I dare not wait upon I would?
— Macbeth.
For love is heaven, and heaven is love.
— Lay of the Last Minstrel.

The soul of Verezzi was filled with irresistible disgust, as, recovering, he found himself in Matilda's arms. His whole frame trembled with chilly horror, and he could scarcely withhold himself from again fainting. He fixed his eyes upon the countenance — they met hers — an ardent fire, mingled with a touching softness, filled their orbits.

In a hurried and almost inarticulate accent, he reproached Matilda with perfidy, baseness, and even murder. The roseate colour which had tinged Matilda's cheek, gave place to an ashy hue — the animation which had sparkled in her eye, yielded to a confused expression of apprehension, as the almost delirious Verezzi uttered accusations he knew not the meaning of; for his brain, maddened by the idea of Julia's death, was whirled round in an ecstasy of terror.

Matilda seemed to have composed every passion: a forced serenity overspread her features, as, in a sympathising and tender tone, she entreated him to calm his emotions, and giving him a composing medicine, left him.

She descended to the saloon.

"Ah! he yet despises me — he even hates me," ejaculated Matilda. "An irresistible antipathy — irresistible, I fear, as my love for him is ardent, has taken possession of his soul towards me. Ah! miserable, hapless being that I am! doomed to have my fondest hope, my brightest prospect, blighted."

Alive alike to the tortures of despair and the illusions of hope, Matilda, now in an agony of desperation, impatiently paced the saloon.

Her mind was inflamed by a more violent emotion of hate towards Julia, as she recollected Verezzi's fond expressions: she determined, however, that were Verezzi not to be hers, he should never be Julia's.

Whilst thus she thought, entered

The conversation was concerning Verezzi.

“How shall I gain his love, ?” exclaimed Matilda. “Oh! I will renew every tender office — I will watch by him day and night, and, by unremitting attentions, I will try to soften his flinty soul. But, alas! it was but now that he started from my arms in horror, and, in accents of desperation, accused me of perfidy — of murder. Could I be perfidious to Verezzi, my heart, which burns with so fervent a fire, declares I could not, and murder—”

Matilda paused.

“Would thou could say thou were guilty, or even accessary to that,” exclaimed , his eye gleaming with disappointed ferocity. “Would Julia of Strobazzo’s heart was reeking on my dagger!”

“Fervently do I join in that wish, my best ,” returned Matilda: “but, alas! what avail wishes — what avail useless protestations of revenge, whilst Julia yet lives? — yet lives, perhaps, again to obtain Verezzi — to clasp him constant to her bosom — and perhaps — oh, horror! perhaps to—”.

Stung to madness by the picture which her fancy had portrayed, Matilda paused.

Her bosom heaved with throbbing palpitations; and, whilst describing the success of her rival, her warring soul shone apparent from her scintillating eyes.

, meanwhile, stood collected in himself; and scarcely heeding the violence of Matilda, awaited the issue of her speech.

He besought her to calm herself, nor, by those violent emotions, unfit herself for prosecuting the attainment of her fondest hope.

“Are you firm?” inquired .

“Yes!”

“Are you resolved? Does fear, amid the other passions, shake your soul?”

“No, no — this heart knows not to fear — this breast knows not to shrink,” exclaimed Matilda eagerly.

“Then be cool — be collected,” returned , “and thy purpose is effected.”

Though little was in these words which might warrant hope, yet Matilda’s susceptible soul, as spoke, thrilled with anticipated delight.

“My maxim, therefore,” said , “through life has been, wherever I am, whatever passions shake my inmost soul, at least to appear collected. I

generally am; for, by suffering no common events, no fortuitous casualty to disturb me, my soul becomes steeled to more interesting trials. I have a spirit, ardent, impetuous as thine; but acquaintance with the world has induced me to veil it, though it still continues to burn within my bosom. Believe me, I am far from wishing to persuade you from your purpose — No — any purpose undertaken with ardour, and prosecuted with perseverance, must eventually be crowned with success. Love is worthy of any risque — I felt it once, but revenge has now swallowed up every other feeling of my soul — I am alive to nothing but revenge. But even did I desire to persuade you from the purpose on which your heart is fixed, I should not say it was wrong to attempt it; for whatever procures pleasure is right, and consonant to the dignity of man, who was created for no other purpose but to obtain happiness; else, why were passions given us? why were those emotions, which agitate my breast, and madden my brain, implanted in us by nature? As for the confused hope of a future state, why should we debar ourselves of the delights of this, even though purchased by what the misguided multitude calls immorality?"

Thus sophistically argued, . — His soul, deadened by crime, could only entertain confused ideas of immortal happiness; for in proportion as human nature departs from virtue, so far are they also from being able clearly to contemplate the wonderful operations, the mysterious ways of Providence.

Coolly and collectedly argued : he delivered his sentiments with the air of one who was wholly convinced of the truth of the doctrines he uttered, — a conviction to be dissipated by shunning proof.

Whilst thus spoke, Matilda remained silent, — she paused. Zastrozzi must have strong powers of reflection; he must be convinced of the truth of his own reasoning, thought Matilda, as eagerly she yet gazed on his countenance — Its unchanging expression of firmness and conviction still continued.—"Ah!" said Matilda, "Zastrozzi, thy words are a balm to my soul, I never yet knew thy real sentiments on this subject; but answer me, do you believe that the soul decays with the body, or if you do not, when this perishable form mingles with its parent earth, where goes the soul which now actuates its movements? perhaps, it wastes its fervent energies in tasteless apathy, or lingering torments."

"Matilda," returned , "think not so; rather suppose, that by its own inmate and energetical exertions, this soul must endure for ever, that no fortuitous occurrences, no incidental events, can affect its happiness; but by

daring boldly, by striving to verge from the beaten path, whilst yet trammelled in the chains of mortality, it will gain superior advantages in a future state."

"But religion! Oh !" —

"I thought thy soul was daring," replied , "I thought thy mind was towering; and did I then err, in the different estimate I had formed of thy character? — O yield not yourself, Matilda thus to false, foolish, and vulgar prejudices — for the present, farewell."

Saying this, departed.

Thus, by an artful appeal to her passions, did extinguish the faint spark of religion which yet gleamed in Matilda's bosom.

In proportion as her belief of an Omnipotent Power, and consequently her hopes of eternal salvation declined, her ardent and unquenchable passion for Verezzi increased, and a delirium of guilty love, filled her soul. —

"Shall I then call him mine for ever?" mentally inquired Matilda; "will the passion which now consumes me, possess my soul to all eternity? Ah! well I know it will; and when emancipated from this terrestrial form, my soul departs; still its fervent energies unrepressed, will remain; and in the union of soul to soul, it will taste celestial transports." An ecstasy of tumultuous and confused delight rushed through her veins: she stood for some time immersed in thought. — Agitated by the emotions of her soul, her every limb trembled — she thought upon 's sentiments, she almost shuddered as she reflected; yet was convinced, by the cool and collected manner in which he had delivered them. — She thought on his advice, and steeling her soul, repressing every emotion, she now acquired that coolness so necessary to the attainment of her desire.

Thinking of nothing else, alive to no idea but Verezzi, Matilda's countenance assumed a placid serenity — she even calmed her soul, she bid it restrain its emotions, and the passions which so lately had battled fiercely in her bosom, were calmed.

She again went to Verezzi's apartment, but, as she approached, vague fears, lest he should have penetrated her schemes confused her: but his mildly beaming eyes, as she gazed upon them, convinced her, that the horrid expressions which he had before uttered, were merely the effect of temporary delirium.

"Ah, Matilda!" exclaimed Verezzi, "where have you been?"

Matilda's soul, alive alike to despair and hope, was filled with momentary delight as he addressed her; but bitter hate, and disappointed love, again tortured her bosom, as he exclaimed in accents of heart-felt agony: "Oh! Julia, my long-lost Julia!"

"Matilda," said he, "my friend, farewell; I feel that I am dying, but I feel pleasure, — oh! transporting pleasure, in the idea that I shall soon meet my Julia. Matilda," added he, "in a softened accent, farewell for ever." Scarcely able to contain the emotions which the idea alone of Verezzi's death excited, Matilda, though the crisis of the disorder, she knew, had been favorable, shuddered — bitter hate, even more rancorous than ever, kindled in her bosom against Julia, for to hear Verezzi talk of her with soul-subduing tenderness, but wound up her soul to the highest pitch of uncontrollable vengeance. — Her breast heaved violently, her dark eye, in expressive glances, told the fierce passions of her soul; yet, sensible of the necessity of controlling her emotions, she leaned her head upon her hand, and when she answered Verezzi, a calmness, a melting expression of grief, overspread her features. She conjured him in the most tender, the most soothing terms, to compose himself, and, though Julia was gone for ever, to remember that there was yet one in the world, one tender friend who would render the burden of life less insupportable.

"Oh! Matilda," exclaimed Verezzi, "talk not to me of comfort, talk not of happiness, all that constituted my comfort, all to which I looked forward with rapturous anticipation of happiness, is fled — fled for ever."

Ceaselessly did Matilda watch by the bed-side of Verezzi; the melting tenderness of his voice, the melancholy, interesting expression of his countenance, but added fuel to the flame which consumed her: her soul was engrossed by one idea; every extraneous passion was conquered, and nerved for the execution of its fondest purpose; a seeming tranquillity overspread her mind, not that tranquillity which results from conscious innocence, and mild delights, but that which calms every tumultuous emotion for a time; when firm in a settled purpose, the passions but pause, to break out with more resistless violence. In the mean time, the strength of Verezzi's constitution overcame the malignity of his disorder, returning strength again braced his nerves, and he was able to descend to the saloon.

The violent grief of Verezzi had subsided into a deep and settled melancholy; he could now talk of his Julia, indeed it was his constant theme; he spoke of her virtues, her celestial form, her sensibility, and by his

ardent professions of eternal fidelity to her memory, unconsciously almost drove Matilda to desperation. — Once he asked Matilda how she died, for on the day when the intelligence first turned his brain, he waited not to hear the particulars, the bare fact drove him to instant madness.

Matilda was startled at the question, yet ready invention supplied the place of a premeditated story.

"Oh! my friend," said she tenderly, "unwillingly do I tell you, that for you she died; disappointed love, like a worm in the bud, destroyed the unhappy Julia; fruitless were all her endeavours to find you, till at last concluding that you were lost to her for ever, a deep melancholy by degrees consumed her, and gently led to the grave — she sank into the arms of death without a groan."

"And there shall I soon follow her," exclaimed Verezzi, as a severer pang of anguish and regret darted through his soul. "I caused her death, whose life was far, far dearer to me than my own. But now it is all over, my hopes of happiness in this world are blasted, blasted for ever."

As he said this, a convulsive sigh heaved his breast, and the tears silently rolled down his cheeks; for some time, in vain were Matilda's endeavours to calm him, till at last, mellowed by time, and overcome by reflection, his violent and fierce sorrow was softened into a fixed melancholy.

Unremittingly Matilda attended him, and gratified his every wish: she, conjecturing that solitude might be detrimental to him, often entertained parties, and endeavoured by gaiety to drive away his dejection, but if Verezzi's spirits were elevated by company and merriment, in solitude again they sank, and a deeper melancholy, a severer regret possessed his bosom, for having allowed himself to be momentarily interested by any thing but the remembrance of his Julia; for he felt a soft, a tender and ecstatic emotion of regret, when retrospection portrayed the blissful time long since gone by, while happy in the society of her whom he idolised, he thought he could be never otherwise than then, enjoying the sweet, the serene delights of association with a congenial mind, he often now amused himself in retracing with his pencil, from memory, scenes which, though in his Julia's society he had beheld unnoticed, yet were now hallowed by the remembrance of her: for he always associated the idea of Julia with the remembrance of those scenes which she had so often admired, and where, accompanied by her, he had so often wandered.

Matilda, meanwhile, firm in the purpose of her soul, unremittingly persevered: she calmed her mind, and though, at intervals, shook by almost super-human emotions, before Verezzi a fixed serenity, a well-feigned sensibility, and a downcast tenderness, marked her manner. Grief, melancholy, a fixed, a quiet depression of spirits, seemed to have calmed every fiercer feeling, when she talked with Verezzi of his lost Julia: but, though subdued for the present, revenge, hate, and the fervour of disappointed love, burned her soul.

Often, when she had retired from Verezzi, when he had talked with tenderness, as he was wont, of Julia, and sworn everlasting fidelity to her memory, would Matilda's soul be tortured by fiercest desperation.

One day, when conversing with him of Julia, she ventured to hint, though remotely, at her own faithful and ardent attachment.

"Think you," replied Verezzi, "that because my Julia's spirit is no longer enshrined in its earthly form, that I am the less devotedly, the less irrevocably hers? — No! no! I was hers, I am hers, and to all eternity shall be hers: and when my soul, divested of mortality, departs into another world, even amid the universal wreck of nature, attracted by congeniality of sentiment, it will seek the unspotted spirit of my idolised Julia. — Oh, Matilda! thy attention, thy kindness, calls for my warmest gratitude — thy virtue demands my sincerest esteem; but, devoted to the memory of Julia, I can love none but her."

Matilda's whole frame trembled with unconquerable emotion, as thus determinedly he rejected her; but, calming the more violent passions, a flood of tears rushed from her eyes; and, as she leant over the back of a sofa on which she reclined, her sobs were audible.

Verezzi's soul was softened towards her — he raised the humbled Matilda, and bid her be comforted, for he was conscious that her tenderness towards him deserved not an unkind return.

"Oh! forgive, forgive me!" exclaimed Matilda, with well-feigned humility; "I knew not what I said." — She then abruptly left the saloon.

Reaching her own apartment, Matilda threw herself on the floor, in an agony of mind too great to be described. Those infuriate passions, restrained as they had been in the presence of Verezzi, now agitated her soul with inconceivable terror. Shook by sudden and irresistible emotions, she gave vent to her despair.

“Where, then, is the boasted mercy of God,” exclaimed the frantic Matilda, “if he suffer his creatures to endure agony such as this? or where his wisdom, if he implant in the heart passions furious — uncontrollable — as mine, doomed to destroy their happiness?”

Outraged pride, disappointed love, and infuriate revenge, revelled through her bosom. Revenge, which called for innocent blood — the blood of the hapless Julia.

Her passions were now wound up to the highest pitch of desperation. In indescribable agony of mind, she dashed her head against the floor — she imprecated a thousand curses upon Julia, and swore eternal revenge.

At last, exhausted by their own violence, the warring passions subsided — a calm took possession of her soul — she thought again upon ‘s advice — Was she now cool? was she now collected?

She was now immersed in a chain of thought; unaccountable, even to herself, was the serenity which had succeeded.

CHAPTER X.

Persevering in the prosecution of her design, the time passed away slowly to Matilda; for Verezzi's frame, becoming every day more emaciated, threatened, to her alarmed imagination, approaching dissolution. — Slowly to Verezzi; for he waited with impatience for the arrival of death, since nothing but misery was his in this world.

Useless would it be to enumerate the conflicts in Matilda's soul: suffice it to say, that they were many, and that their violence progressively increased.

Verezzi's illness at last assumed so dangerous an appearance, that Matilda, alarmed, sent for a physician.

The humane man, who had attended Verezzi before, was from home, but one, skilful in his profession, arrived, who declared that a warmer climate could alone restore Verezzi's health.

Matilda proposed to him to remove to a retired and picturesque spot which she possessed in the Venetian territory. Verezzi, expecting speedy dissolution, and conceiving it to be immaterial where he died, consented; and indeed he was unwilling to pain one so kind as Matilda by a refusal.

The following morning was fixed for the journey.

The morning arrived, and Verezzi was lifted into the chariot, being yet extremely weak and emaciated.

Matilda, during the journey, by every care, every kind and sympathising attention, tried to drive away Verezzi's melancholy; sensible that, could the weight which pressed upon his spirits be removed, he would speedily regain health. But, no! it was impossible. Though he was grateful for Matilda's attention, a still deeper shade of melancholy overspread his features; a more heart-felt inanity and languor sapped his life. He was sensible of a total distaste of former objects — objects which, perhaps, had formerly forcibly interested him. The terrific grandeur of the Alps, the dashing cataract, as it foamed beneath their feet, ceased to excite those feelings of awe which formerly they were wont to inspire. The lofty pine-groves inspired no additional melancholy, nor did the blooming valleys of Piedmont, or the odoriferous orangeries which scented the air, gladden his deadened soul.

They travelled on — they soon entered the Venetian territory, where, in a gloomy and remote spot, stood the Castella di Laurentini.

It was situated in a dark forest — lofty mountains around lifted their aspiring and craggy summits to the skies.

The mountains were clothed half up by ancient pines and plane-trees, whose immense branches stretched far; and above, bare granite rocks, on which might be seen, occasionally, a scathed larch, lifted their gigantic and mishapen forms.

In the centre of an amphitheatre, formed by these mountains, surrounded by wood, stood the Castella di Laurentini, whose grey turrets, and time-worn battlements, overtopped the giants of the forest.

Into this gloomy mansion was Verezzi conducted by Matilda. The only sentiment he felt, was surprise at the prolongation of his existence. As he advanced, supported by Matilda and a domestic, into the castella, Matilda's soul, engrossed by one idea, confused by its own unquenchable passions, felt not that ecstatic, that calm and serene delight, only experienced by the innocent, and which is excited by a return to the place where we have spent our days of infancy.

No — she felt not this: the only pleasurable emotion which her return to this remote castella afforded, was the hope that, disengaged from the tumult of, and proximity to the world, she might be the less interrupted in the prosecution of her madly-planned schemes.

Though Verezzi's melancholy seemed rather increased than diminished by the journey, yet his health was visibly improved by the progressive change of air and variation of scenery, which must, at times, momentarily alleviate the most deep-rooted grief; yet, again in a fixed spot — again left to solitude and his own torturing reflections, Verezzi's mind returned to his lost, his still adored Julia. He thought of her ever; unconsciously he spoke of her; and, by his rapturous exclamations, sometimes almost drove Matilda to desperation.

Several days thus passed away. Matilda's passion, which, mellowed by time, and diverted by the variety of objects, and the hurry of the journey, had relaxed its violence, now, like a stream pent up, burst all bounds.

But one evening, maddened by the tender protestations of eternal fidelity to Julia's memory which Verezzi uttered, her brain was almost turned.

Her tumultuous soul, agitated by contending emotions, flashed from her eyes. Unable to disguise the extreme violence of her sensations, in an ecstasy of despairing love, she rushed from the apartment, where she had left Verezzi, and, unaccompanied, wandered into the forest, to calm her

emotions, and concert some better plans of revenge; for, in Verezzi's presence, she scarcely dared to think.

Her infuriated soul burned with fiercest revenge: she wandered into the trackless forest, and, conscious that she was unobserved, gave vent to her feelings in wild exclamations.

"Oh! Julia! hated Julia! words are not able to express my detestation of thee. Thou hast destroyed Verezzi — thy cursed image, revelling in his heart, has blasted my happiness for ever; but, ere I die, I will taste revenge — oh! exquisite revenge!" She paused — she thought of the passion which consumed her—"Perhaps one no less violent has induced Julia to rival me," said she. Again the idea of Verezzi's illness — perhaps his death — infuriated her soul. Pity, chased away by vengeance and disappointed passion, fled.—"Did I say that I pitied thee? Detested Julia, much did my words belie the feelings of my soul. No — no — thou shalt not escape me. — Pity thee!"

Again immersed in corroding thought, she heeded not the hour, till looking up, she saw the shades of night were gaining fast upon the earth. The evening was calm and serene: gently agitated by the evening zephyr, the lofty pines sighed mournfully. Far to the west appeared the evening star, which faintly glittered in the twilight. The scene was solemnly calm, but not in unison with Matilda's soul. Softest, most melancholy music, seemed to float upon the southern gale. Matilda listened — it was the nuns at a convent, chanting the requiem for the soul of a departed sister.

"Perhaps gone to heaven!" exclaimed Matilda, as, affected by the contrast, her guilty soul trembled. A chain of horrible racking thoughts pressed upon her soul; and, unable to bear the acuteness of her sensations, she hastily returned to the castella.

Thus, marked only by the varying paroxysms of the passions which consumed her, Matilda passed the time: her brain was confused, her mind agitated by the ill success of her schemes, and her spirits, once so light and buoyant, were now depressed by disappointed hope.

What shall I next concert? was the mental inquiry of Matilda. Ah! I know not.

She suddenly started — she thought of .

"Oh! that I should have till now forgotten ," exclaimed Matilda, as a new ray of hope darted through her soul. "But he is now at Naples, and some time must necessarily elapse before I can see him.

“Oh, , Zastrozzi! would that you were here!”

No sooner had she well arranged her resolutions, which before had been confused by eagerness, than she summoned Ferdinand, on whose fidelity she dared to depend, and bid him speed to Naples, and bear a letter, with which he was intrusted, to .

Meanwhile Verezzi’s health, as the physician had predicted, was so much improved by the warm climate and pure air of the Castella di Laurentini, that, though yet extremely weak and emaciated, he was able, as the weather was fine, and the summer evenings tranquil, to wander, accompanied by Matilda, through the surrounding scenery.

In this gloomy solitude, where, except the occasional and infrequent visits of a father confessor, nothing occurred to disturb the uniform tenour of their life, Verezzi was every thing to Matilda — she thought of him ever: at night, in dreams, his image was present to her enraptured imagination. She was uneasy, except in his presence; and her soul, shook by contending paroxysms of the passion which consumed her, was transported by unutterable ecstasies of delirious and maddening love.

Her taste for music was exquisite; her voice of celestial sweetness; and her skill, as she drew sounds of soul-touching melody from the harp, enraptured the mind to melancholy pleasure.

The affecting expression of her voice, mellowed as it was by the tenderness which at times stole over her soul, softened Verezzi’s listening ear to ecstasy.

Yet, again recovering from the temporary delight which her seductive blandishments had excited, he thought of Julia. As he remembered her ethereal form, her retiring modesty, and unaffected sweetness, a more violent, a deeper pang of regret and sorrow assailed his bosom, for having suffered himself to be even momentarily interested by Matilda.

Hours, days, passed lingering away. They walked in the evenings around the environs of the castella — woods, dark and gloomy, stretched far — cloud-capt mountains reared their gigantic summits high; and, dashing amidst the jutting rocks, foaming cataracts, with sudden and impetuous course, sought the valley below.

Amid this scenery the wily Matilda usually led her victim.

One evening when the moon, rising over the gigantic outline of the mountain, silvered the far-seen cataract, Matilda and Verezzi sought the forest.

For a time neither spoke: the silence was uninterrupted, save by Matilda's sighs, which declared that violent and repressed emotions tortured the bosom within.

They silently advanced into the forest. The azure sky was spangled with stars — not a wind agitated the unruffled air — not a cloud obscured the brilliant concavity of heaven. They ascended an eminence, clothed with towering wood; the trees around formed an amphitheatre. Beneath, by a gentle ascent, an opening showed an immense extent of forest, dimly seen by the moon, which overhung the opposite mountain. The craggy heights beyond might distinctly be seen, edged by the beams of the silver moon.

Verezzi threw himself on the turf.

"What a beautiful scene, Matilda!" he exclaimed.

"Beautiful indeed," returned Matilda. "I have admired it ever, and brought you here this evening on purpose to discover whether you thought of the works of nature as I do."

"Oh! fervently do I admire this," exclaimed Verezzi, as, engrossed by the scene before him, he gazed enraptured.

"Suffer me to retire for a few minutes," said Matilda.

Without waiting for Verezzi's answer, she hastily entered a small tuft of trees. Verezzi gazed surprised; and soon sounds of such ravishing melody stole upon the evening breeze, that Verezzi thought some spirit of the solitude had made audible to mortal ears ethereal music.

He still listened — it seemed to die away — and again a louder, a more rapturous swell, succeeded.

The music was in unison with the scene — it was in unison with Verezzi's soul: and the success of Matilda's artifice, in this respect, exceeded her most sanguine expectation.

He still listened — the music ceased — and Matilda's symmetrical form emerging from the wood, roused Verezzi from his vision.

He gazed on her — her loveliness and grace struck forcibly upon his senses: her sensibility, her admiration of objects which enchanted him, flattered him; and her judicious arrangement of the music, left no doubt in his mind but that, experiencing the same sensations herself, the feelings of his soul were not unknown to her.

Thus far every thing went on as Matilda desired. To touch his feeling had been her constant aim: could she find any thing which interested him; any thing to divert his melancholy; or could she succeed in effacing another

from his mind, she had no doubt but that he would quickly and voluntarily clasp her to his bosom.

By affecting to coincide with him in every thing — by feigning to possess that congeniality of sentiment and union of idea, which he thought so necessary to the existence of love, she doubted not soon to accomplish her purpose.

But sympathy and congeniality of sentiment, however necessary to that love which calms every fierce emotion, fills the soul with a melting tenderness, and, without disturbing it, continually possesses the soul, was by no means consonant to the ferocious emotions, the unconquerable and ardent passion which revelled through Matilda's every vein.

When enjoying the society of him she loved, calm delight, unruffled serenity, possessed not her soul. No — but, inattentive to every object but him, even her proximity to him agitated her with almost uncontrollable emotion.

Whilst watching his look, her pulse beat with unwonted violence, her breast palpitated, and, unconscious of it herself, an ardent and voluptuous fire darted from her eyes.

Her passion too, controlled as it was in the presence of Verezzi, agitated her soul with progressively-increasing fervour. Nursed by solitude, and wound up, perhaps, beyond any pitch which another's soul might be capable of, it sometimes almost maddened her.

Still, surprised at her own forbearance, yet strongly perceiving the necessity of it, she spoke not again of her passion to Verezzi.

CHAPTER XI.

At last the day arrived when Matilda expected Ferdinand's return. Punctual to his time Ferdinand returned, and told Matilda that had, for the present, taken up his abode at a cottage, not far from thence, and that he there awaited her arrival.

Matilda was much surprised that preferred a cottage to her castella; but dismissing that from her mind, hastily prepared to attend him.

She soon arrived at the cottage. met her — he quickened his pace towards her.

"Well, ," exclaimed Matilda, inquiringly.

"Oh!" said , "our schemes have all, as yet, been unsuccessful. Julia yet lives, and, surrounded by wealth and power, yet defies our vengeance. I was planning her destruction, when, obedient to your commands, I came here."

"Alas!" exclaimed Matilda, "I fear it must be ever thus: but, , much I need your advice — your assistance. Long have I languished in hopeless love: often have I expected, and as often have my eager expectations been blighted by disappointment."

A deep sigh of impatience burst from Matilda's bosom, as, unable to utter more, she ceased.

"'Tis but the image of that accursed Julia," replied , "revelling in his breast, which prevents him from becoming instantly yours. Could you but efface that!"'

"I would I could efface it," said Matilda: "the friendship which now exists between us, would quickly ripen into love, and I should be for ever happy. How, , can that be done? But, before we think of happiness, we must have a care to our safety: we must destroy Julia, who yet endeavours, by every means, to know the event of Verezzi's destiny. But, surrounded by wealth and power as she is, how can that be done? No bravo in Naples dare attempt her life: no rewards, however great, could tempt the most abandoned of men to brave instant destruction, in destroying her; and should we attempt it, the most horrible tortures of the Inquisition, a disgraceful death, and that without the completion of our desire, would be the consequence."

"Think not so, Matilda," answered Zastrezzi; "think not, because Julia possesses wealth, that she is less assailable by the dagger of one eager for

revenge as I am; or that, because she lives in splendor at Naples, that a poisoned chalice, prepared by your hand, the hand of a disappointed rival, could not send her writhing and convulsed to the grave. No, no; she can die, nor shall we writhe on the rack."

"Oh!" interrupted Matilda, "I care not, if, writhing in the prisons of the Inquisition, I suffer the most excruciating torment; I care not if, exposed to public view, I suffer the most ignominious and disgraceful of deaths, if, before I die — if, before this spirit seeks another world, I gain my purposed design, I enjoy unutterable, and, as yet, inconceivable happiness."

The evening meanwhile came on, and, warned by the lateness of the hour to separate, Matilda and parted.

pursued his way to the cottage, and Matilda, deeply musing, retraced her steps to the castella.

The wind was fresh, and rather tempestuous: light fleeting clouds were driven rapidly across the dark-blue sky. The moon, in silver majesty, hung high in eastern ether, and rendered transparent as a celestial spirit the shadowy clouds which at intervals crossed her orbit, and by degrees vanished like a vision in the obscurity of distant air. On this scene gazed Matilda — a train of confused thought took possession of her soul — her crimes, her past life, rose in array to her terror-struck imagination. Still burning love, unrepressed, unconquerable passion, revelled through every vein: her senses, rendered delirious by guilty desire, were whirled around in an inexpressible ecstasy of anticipated delight — delight, not unmixed by confused apprehensions.

She stood thus with her arms folded, as if contemplating the spangled concavity of heaven.

It was late — later than the usual hour of return, and Verezzi had gone out to meet Matilda.

"What! deep in thought, Matilda?" exclaimed Verezzi, playfully.

Matilda's cheek, as he thus spoke, was tinged with a momentary blush; it however quickly passed away; and she replied, "I was enjoying the serenity of the evening, the beauty of the setting sun, and then the congenial twilight induced me to wander farther than usual."

The unsuspicious Verezzi observed nothing peculiar in the manner of Matilda; but, observing that the night air was chill, conducted her back to the castella. No art was left untried, no blandishment omitted, on the part of Matilda, to secure her victim. Every thing which he liked, she affected to

admire: every sentiment uttered by Verezzi was always anticipated by the observing Matilda; but long was all in vain — long was every effort to obtain his love useless.

Often, when she touched the harp, and drew sounds of enchanting melody from its strings, whilst her almost celestial form bent over it, did Verezzi gaze enraptured, and, forgetful of every thing else, yielding himself to a tumultuous oblivion of pleasure, listened entranced.

But all her art could not draw Julia from his memory: he was much softened towards Matilda; he felt esteem, tenderest esteem — but he yet loved not.

Thus passed the time. — Often would desperation, and an idea that Verezzi would never love her, agitate Matilda with most violent agony. The beauties of nature which surrounded the eastella had no longer power to interest: borne away on swelling thought, often, in the solitude of her own apartment, her spirit was wafted on the wings of anticipating fancy. Sometimes imagination portrayed the most horrible images for futurity: Verezzi's hate, perhaps his total dereliction of her; his union with Julia, pressed upon her brain, and almost drove her to distraction, for Verezzi alone filled every thought; nourished by restless reveries, the most horrible anticipations blasted the blooming Matilda. — Sometimes, however, a gleam of sense shot across her soul: deceived by visions of unreal bliss, she acquired new courage, and fresh anticipations of delight, from a beam which soon withdrew its ray; for, usually sunk in gloom, her dejected eyes were fixed on the ground; though sometimes an ardent expression, kindled by the anticipation of gratified desire, flashed from their fiery orbits.

Often, whilst thus agitated by contending emotions, her soul was shook, and, unconscious of its intentions, knew not the most preferable plan to pursue, would she seek : on him, unconscious why, she relied much — his words were those of calm reflection and experience; and his sophistry, whilst it convinced her that a superior being exists not, who can control our actions, brought peace to her mind — peace to be succeeded by horrible and resistless conviction of the falsehood of her coadjutor's arguments: still, however, they calmed her; and, by addressing her reason and passions at the same time, deprived her of the power of being benefited by either.

The health of Verezzi, meanwhile, slowly mended: his mind, however, shook by so violent a trial as it had undergone, recovered not its vigour, but, mellowed by time, his grief, violent and irresistible as it had been at first,

now became a fixed melancholy, which spread itself over his features, was apparent in every action, and, by resistance, inflamed Matilda's passion to tenfold fury.

The touching tenderness of Verezzi's voice, the dejected softened expression of his eye, touched her soul with tumultuous yet milder emotions. In his presence she felt calmed; and those passions which, in solitude, were almost too fierce for endurance, when with him were softened into a tender though confused delight.

It was one evening, when no previous appointment existed between Matilda and , that, overcome by disappointed passion, Matilda sought the forest.

The sky was unusually obscured, the sun had sunk beneath the western mountain, and its departing ray tinged the heavy clouds with a red glare. — The rising blast sighed through the towering pines, which rose loftily above Matilda's head: the distant thunder, hoarse as the murmurs of the grove, in indistinct echoes mingled with the hollow breeze; the scintillating lightning flashed incessantly across her path, as Matilda, heeding not the storm, advanced along the trackless forest.

The crashing thunder now rattled madly above, the lightnings flashed a larger curve, and at intervals, through the surrounding gloom, showed a scathed larch, which, blasted by frequent storms, reared its bare head on a height above.

Matilda sat upon a fragment of jutting granite, and contemplated the storm which raged around her. The portentous calm, which at intervals occurred amid the reverberating thunder, portentous of a more violent tempest, resembled the serenity which spread itself over Matilda's mind — a serenity only to be succeeded by a fiercer paroxysm of passion.

CHAPTER XII.

Still sat Matilda upon the rock — she still contemplated the tempest which raged around her.

The battling elements paused: an uninterrupted silence, deep, dreadful as the silence of the tomb, succeeded. Matilda heard a noise — footsteps were distinguishable, and looking up, a flash of vivid lightning disclosed to her view the towering form of .

His gigantic figure was again involved in pitchy darkness, as the momentary lightning receded. A peal of crashing thunder again madly rattled over the zenith, and a scintillating flash announced ‘s approach, as he stood before Matilda.

Matilda, surprised at his approach, started as he addressed her, and felt an indescribable awe, when she reflected on the wonderful casualty which, in this terrific and tempestuous hour, had led them to the same spot.

“Doubtless his feelings are violent and irresistible as mine: perhaps these led him to meet me here.”

She shuddered as she reflected; but smothering the sensations of alarm which she had suffered herself to be surprised by, she asked him what had led him to the forest.

“The same which led you here, Matilda,” returned : “the same influence which actuates us both, has doubtless inspired that congeniality which, in this frightful storm, led us to the same spot.”

“Oh!” exclaimed Matilda, “how shall I touch the obdurate Verezzi’s soul? he still despises me — he declares himself to be devoted to the memory of his Julia; and that although she be dead, he is not the less devotedly hers. What can be done?”

Matilda paused; and, much agitated, awaited ‘s reply.

, meanwhile, stood collected in himself, and firm as the rocky mountain which lifts its summit to heaven.

“Matilda,” said he, “to-morrow evening will pave the way for that happiness which your soul has so long panted for, if, indeed, the event which will then occur does not completely conquer Verezzi. But the violence of the tempest increases — let us seek shelter.”

“Oh! heed not the tempest,” said Matilda, whose expectations were raised to the extreme of impatience by ‘s dark hints—”heed not the tempest,

but proceed, if you wish not to see me expiring at your feet."

"You fear not the tumultuous elements — nor do I," replied—"I assert again, that if to-morrow evening you lead Verezzi to this spot — if, in the event which will here occur, you display that presence of mind, which I believe you to possess, Verezzi is yours."

"Ah! what do you say, , that Verezzi will be mine?" inquired Matilda, as the anticipation of inconceivable happiness dilated her soul with sudden and excessive delight.

"I say again, Matilda," returned , "that if you dare to brave the dagger's point — if you but make Verezzi owe his life to you—"

paused, and Matilda acknowledged her insight of his plan, which her enraptured fancy represented as the basis of her happiness.

"Could he, after she had, at the risk of her own life, saved his, unfeelingly reject her? Would those noble sentiments, which the greatest misfortunes were unable to extinguish, suffer that? — No."

Full of these ideas, her brain confused by the ecstatic anticipation of happiness which pressed upon it, Matilda retraced her footsteps towards the castella.

The violence of the storm which so lately had raged was passed — the thunder, in low and indistinct echoes, now sounded through the chain of rocky mountains, which stretched far to the north — the azure, and almost cloudless either, was studded with countless stars, as Matilda entered the castella, and, as the hour was late, sought her own apartment.

Sleep fled not, as usual, from her pillow; but, overcome by excessive drowsiness, she soon sank to rest.

Confused dreams floated in her imagination, in which she sometimes supposed that she had gained Verezzi; at others, that, snatched from her ardent embrace, he was carried by an invisible power over rocky mountains, or immense and untravelled heaths, and that, in vainly attempting to follow him, she had lost herself in the trackless desert.

Awakened from disturbed and unconnected dreams, she arose.

The most tumultuous emotions of rapturous exultation filled her soul as she gazed upon her victim, who was sitting at a window which overlooked the waving forest.

Matilda seated herself by him, and most enchanting, most pensive music, drawn by her fingers from a harp, thrilled his soul with an ecstasy of melancholy; tears rolled rapidly down his cheeks; deep drawn, though

gentle sighs heaved his bosom: his innocent eyes were mildly fixed upon Matilda, and beamed with compassion for one, whose only wish was gratification of her own inordinate desires, and destruction to his opening prospects of happiness.

She, with a ferocious pleasure, contemplated her victim; yet, curbing the passions of her soul, a meekness, a wellfeigned sensibility, characterised her downcast eye.

She waited, with the smothered impatience of expectation, for the evening: then, had affirmed, that she would lay a firm foundation for her happiness.

Unappalled, she resolved to brave the dagger's point: she resolved to bleed; and though her life-blood were to issue at the wound, to dare the event.

The evening at last arrived: the atmosphere was obscured by vapour, and the air more chill than usual; yet, yielding to the solicitations of Matilda, Verezzi accompanied her to the forest.

Matilda's bosom thrilled with inconceivable happiness, as she advanced towards the spot: her limbs, trembling with ecstasy, almost refused to support her. Unwonted sensations — sensations she had never felt before, agitated her bosom; yet, steeling her soul, and persuading herself that celestial transports would be the reward of firmness, she fearlessly advanced.

The towering pine-trees waved in the squally wind — the shades of twilight gained fast on the dusky forest — the wind died away, and a deep, a gloomy silence reigned.

They now had arrived at the spot which had asserted would be the scene of an event which might lay the foundation of Matilda's happiness.

She was agitated by such violent emotions, that her every limb trembled, and Verezzi tenderly asked the reason of her alarm.

"Oh! nothing, nothing!" returned Matilda; but, stung by more certain anticipation of ecstasy by his tender inquiry, her whole frame trembled with tenfold agitation, and her bosom was filled with more unconquerable transport.

On the right, the thick umbrage of the forest trees, rendered undistinguishable any one who might lurk there; on the left, a frightful precipice yawned, at whose base a deafening cataract dashed with tumultuous violence; around, mishapen and enormous masses of rock; and

beyond, a gigantic and blackened mountain, reared its craggy summit to the skies.

They advanced towards the precipice. Matilda stood upon the dizzy height — her senses almost failed her, and she caught the branch of an enormous pine which impended over the abyss.

“How frightful a depth!” exclaimed Matilda.

“Frightful indeed,” said Verezzi, as thoughtfully he contemplated the terrific depth beneath.

They stood for some time gazing on the scene in silence.

Footsteps were heard — Matilda’s bosom thrilled with mixed sensations of delight and apprehension, as, summoning all her fortitude, she turned round. — A man advanced towards them.

“What is your business?” exclaimed Verezzi.

“Revenge!” returned the villain, as, raising a dagger high, he essayed to plunge it in Verezzi’s bosom, but Matilda lifted her arm, and the dagger piercing it, touched not Verezzi. Starting forward, he fell to the earth, and the ruffian instantly dashed into the thick forest.

Matilda’s snowy arm was tinged with purple gore: the wound was painful, but an expression of triumph flashed from her eyes, and excessive pleasure dilated her bosom: the blood streamed fast from her arm, and tinged the rock whereon they stood with a purple stain.

Verezzi started from the ground, and seeing the blood which streamed down Matilda’s garments, in accents of terror demanded where she was wounded.

“Oh! think not upon that,” she exclaimed, “but tell me — ah! tell me,” said she, in a voice of well-feigned alarm, “are you wounded mortally? Oh! what sensations of terror shook me, when I thought that the dagger’s point, after having pierced my arm, had drunk your life-blood.”

“Oh!” answered Verezzi, “I am not wounded; but let us haste to the castella.”

He then tore part of his vest, and with it bound Matilda’s arm. Slowly they proceeded towards the castella.

“What villain, Verezzi,” said Matilda, “envious of my happiness, attempted his life, for whom I would ten thousand times sacrifice my own? Oh! Verezzi, how I thank God, who averted the fatal dagger from thy heart!”

Verezzi answered not; but his heart, his feelings, were irresistibly touched by Matilda's behaviour. Such noble contempt of danger, so ardent a passion, as to risk her life to preserve his, filled his breast with a tenderness towards her; and he felt that he could now deny her nothing, not even the sacrifice of the poor remains of his happiness, should she demand it.

Matilds's breast meanwhile swelled with sensations of unutterable delight: her soul, borne on the pinions of anticipated happiness, flashed in triumphant glances from her fiery eyes. She could scarcely forbear clasping Verezzi in her arms, and claiming him as her own; but prudence, and a fear of in what manner a premature declaration of love might be received, prevented her.

They arrived at the castella, and a surgeon from the neighbouring convent was sent for by Verezzi.

The surgeon soon arrived, examined Matilda's arm, and declared that no unpleasant consequences could ensue. — Retired to her own apartment, those transports, which before had been allayed by Verezzi's presence, now, unrestrained by reason, involved Matilda's senses in an ecstasy of pleasure.

She threw herself on the bed, and, in all the exaggerated colours of imagination, portrayed the transports which 's artifice has opened to her view.

Visions of unreal bless floated during the whole night in her disordered fancy: her senses were whirled around in alternate ecstasies of happiness and despair, as almost palpable dreams pressed upon her disturbed brain.

At one time she imagined that Verezzi, consenting to their union, presented her his hand: that at her touch the flesh crumbled from it, and, a shrieking spectre, he fled from her view: again, silvery clouds floated across her sight, and unconnected, disturbed visions occupied her imagination till the morning.

Verezzi's manner, as he met Matilda the following morning, was unusually soft and tender; and in a voice of solicitude, he inquired concerning her health.

The roseate flush of animation which tinged her cheek, the triumphant glance of animation which danced in her scintillating eye, seemed to render the inquiry unnecessary.

A dewy moisture filled her eyes, as she gazed with an expression of tumultuous, yet repressed rapture, upon the hapless Verezzi.

Still did she purpose, in order to make her triumph more certain, to protract the hour of victory; and, leaving her victim, wandered into the forest to seek . When she arrived at the cottage, she learnt that he had walked forth. — She soon met him.

“Oh! — my best Zastrozzi!” exclaimed Matilda, “what a source of delight have you opened to me! Verezzi is mine — oh! transporting thought! will be mine for ever. That distant manner which he usually affected towards me, is changed to a sweet, an ecstatic expression of tenderness. Oh! Zastrozzi, receive my best, my most fervent thanks.”

“Julia need not die then,” muttered ; “when once you possess Verezzi, her destruction is of little consequence.”

The most horrible scheme of revenge at this instant glanced across ‘s mind.

“Oh! Julia must die,” said Matilda, “or I shall never be safe; such an influence does her image possess over Verezzi’s mind, that I am convinced, were he to know that she lived, an estrangement from me would be the consequence. Oh! quickly let me hear that she is dead. I can never enjoy uninterrupted happiness until her dissolution.”

“What you have just pronounced is Julia’s death-warrant,” said , as he disappeared among the thick trees.

Matilda returned to the castella.

Verezzi, at her return, expressed a tender apprehension, lest, thus wounded, she should have hurt herself by walking; but Matilda quieted his fears, and engaged him in interesting conversation, which seemed not to have for its object the seduction of his affection; though the ideas conveyed by her expressions were so artfully connected with it, and addressed themselves so forcibly to Verezzi’s feelings, that he was convinced he ought to love Matilda, though he felt that within himself, which, in spite of reason — in spite of reflection — told him that it was impossible.

CHAPTER XIII.

The enticing smile, the modest-seeming eye.
Beneath whose beauteous beams, belying heaven.
Lurk searchless cunning, cruelty, and death.
— Thomson.

Still did Matilda's blandishments — her unremitting attention — inspire Verezzi with a softened tenderness towards her. — He regarded her as one who, at the risk of her own life, had saved his; who loved him with an ardent affection, and whose affection was likely to be lasting: and though he could not regard her with that enthusiastic tenderness with which he even yet adored the memory of his Julia, yet he might esteem her — faithfully esteem her — and felt not that horror at uniting himself with her as formerly. But a conversation which he had with Julia recurred to his mind: he remembered well, that when they had talked of their speedy marriage, she had expressed an idea, that a union in this life might endure to all eternity; and that the chosen of his heart on earth, might, by congeniality of sentiment, be united in heaven.

The idea was hallowed by the remembrance of his Julia; but chasing it, as an unreal vision, from his mind, again his high sentiments of gratitude prevailed.

Lost in these ideas, involved in a train of thought, and unconscious where his footsteps led him, he quitted the castella. His reverie was interrupted by low murmurs, which seemed to float on the silence of the forest: it was scarcely audible, yet Verezzi felt an undefinable wish to know what it was. He advanced towards it — it was Matilda's voice.

Verezzi approached nearer, and from within heard her voice in complaints. — He eagerly listened. — Her sobs rendered the words, which in passionate exclamations burst from Matilda's lips, almost inaudible. He still listened — a pause in the tempest of grief which shook Matilda's soul seemed to have taken place.

"Oh! Verezzi — cruel, unfeeling Verezzi!" exclaimed Matilda, as a fierce paroxysm of passion seized her brain—"will you thus suffer one who adores you, to linger in hopeless love, and witness the excruciating agony of one who idolises you, as I do, to madness?"

As she spoke thus, a long-drawn sigh closed the sentence.

Verezzi's mind was agitated by various emotions as he stood; but rushing in at last, raised Matilda in his arms, and tenderly attempted to comfort her.

She started as he entered — she heeded not his words; but, seemingly overcome by shame, cast herself at his feet, and hid her face in his robe.

He tenderly raised her, and his expressions convinced her, that the reward of all her anxiety was now about to be reaped.

The most triumphant anticipation of transports to come filled her bosom; yet, knowing it to be necessary to dissemble — knowing that a shameless claim on his affections would but disgust Verezzi, she said —

"Oh! Verezzi, forgive me: supposing myself to be alone — supposing no one overheard the avowal of the secret of my soul, with which, believe me, I never more intended to have importuned you, what shameless sentiments — shameless even in solitude — have I not given vent to. I can no longer conceal, that the passion with which I adore you is unconquerable, irresistible: but, I conjure you, think not upon what you have this moment heard to my disadvantage; nor despise a weak unhappy creature, who feels it impossible to overcome the fatal passion which consumes her.

"Never more will I give vent, even in solitude, to my love — never more shall the importunities of the hapless Matilda reach your ears. To conquer a passion fervent, tender as mine, is impossible."

As she thus spoke, Matilda, seemingly overcome by shame, sank upon the turf.

A sentiment stronger than gratitude, more ardent than esteem, and more tender than admiration, softened Verezzi's heart as he raised Matilda. Her symmetrical from shone with tenfold loveliness to his heated fancy: inspired with sudden fondness, he cast himself at her feet.

A Lethean torpor crept upon his senses; and, as he lay prostrate before Matilda, a total forgetfulness of every former event of his life swam in his dizzy brain. In passionate exclamations he avowed unbounded love.

"Oh, Matilda! dearest, angelic Matilda!" exclaimed Verezzi, "I am even now unconscious what blinded me — what kept me from acknowledging my adoration of thee! — adoration never to be changed by circumstances — never effaced by time."

The fire of voluptuous, of maddening love, scorched his veins, as he caught the transported Matilda in his arms, and, in accents almost inarticulate with passion, swore eternal fidelity.

“And accept my oath of everlasting allegiance to thee, adored Verezzi,” exclaimed Matilda: “accept my vows of eternal, indissoluble love.”

Verezzi’s whole frame was agitated by unwonted and ardent emotions. He called Matilda his wife — in the delirium of sudden fondness he clasped her to his bosom—”and though love like ours,” exclaimed the infatuated Verezzi, “wants not the vain ties of human laws, yet, that our love may want not any sanction which could possibly be given to it, let immediate orders be given for the celebration of our union.”

Matilda exultingly consented: never had she experienced sensations of delight like these: the feelings of her soul flushed in exulting glances from her fiery eyes. Fierce, transporting triumph filled her soul as she gazed on her victim, whose mildly-beaming eyes were now characterised by a voluptuous expression. Her heart beat high with transport; and, as they entered the castella, the swelling emotions of her bosom were too tumultuous for utterance.

Wild with passion, she clasped Verezzi to her beating breast; and, overcome by an ecstasy of delirious passion, her senses were whirled around in confused and inexpressible delight. A new and fierce passion raged likewise in Verezzi’s breast: he returned her embrace with ardour, and clasped her in fierce transports.

But the adoration with which he now regarded Matilda, was a different sentiment from that chaste and mild emotion which had characterised his love for Julia: that passion, which he had fondly supposed would end but with his existence, was effaced by the arts of another.

Now was Matilda’s purpose attained — the next day would behold her his bride — the next day would behold her fondest purpose accomplished.

With the most eager impatience, the fiercest anticipation of transport, did she wait for its arrival.

Slowly passed the day, and slowly did the clock toll each lingering hour as it rolled away.

The following morning at last arrived: Matilda arose from a sleepless couch — fierce, transporting triumph, flashed from her eyes as she embraced her victim. He returned it — he called her his dear and ever-beloved spouse; and, in all the transports of maddening love, declared his impatience for the arrival of the monk who was to unite them. Every blandishment — every thing which might dispel reflection, was this day put in practice by Matilda.

The monk at last arrived: the fatal ceremony — fatal to the peace of Verezzi — was performed.

A magnificent feast had been previously arranged; every luxurious viand, every expensive wine, which might contribute to heighten Matilda's triumph, was present in profusion.

Matilda's joy, her soul-felt triumph, was too great for utterance — too great for concealment. The exultation of her inmost soul flashed in expressive glances from her scintillating eyes, expressive of joy intense — unutterable.

Animated with excessive delight, she started from the table, and, seizing Verezzi's hand, in a transport of inconceivable bliss, dragged him in wild sport and varied movements, to the sound of swelling and soul-touching melody.

"Come, my Matilda," at last exclaimed Verezzi, "come, I am weary of transport — sick with excess of unutterable pleasure: let us retire, and retrace in dreams the pleasures of the day."

Little did Verezzi think that this day was the basis of his future misery: little did he think that, amid the roses of successful and licensed voluptuousness, regret, horror, and despair would arise, to blast the prospects which, Julia being forgot, appeared so fair, so ecstatic.

The morning came. — Inconceivable emotions — inconceivable to those who have never felt them — dilated Matilda's soul with an ecstasy of inexpressible bliss: every barrier to her passion was thrown down — every opposition conquered; still was her bosom the scene of fierce and contending passions.

Though in possession of every thing which her fancy had portrayed with such excessive delight, she was far from feeling that innocent and clam pleasure which soothes the soul, and, calming each violent emotion, fills it with a serene happiness. No — her brain was whirled around in transports; fierce, confused transports of visionary and unreal bliss: though her every pulse, her every nerve, panted with the delight of gratified and expectant desire; still was she not happy; she enjoyed not that tranquillity which is necessary to the existence of happiness.

In this temper of mind, for a short period she left Verezzi, as she had appointed a meeting with her coadjutor in wickedness.

She soon met him.

“I need not ask,” exclaimed , “for well do I see, in those triumphant glances, that Verezzi is thine; that the plan which we concerted when last we met, has put you in possession of that which your soul panted for.”

“Oh! !” said Matilda,—”kind, excellent Zastrozzi; what words can express the gratitude which I feel towards you — what words can express the bliss exquisite, celestial, which I owe to your advice; yet still, amid the roses of successful love — amid the ecstasies of transporting voluptuousness — fear, blighting chilly fear, damps my hopes of happiness. Julia, the hated, accursed Julia’s image, is the phantom which scares my otherwise certain confidence of eternal delight: could she but be hurled to destruction — could some other artifice of my friend sweep her from the number of the living—”

“‘Tis enough, Matilda,” interrupted ; “‘tis enough: in six days hence meet me here; meanwhile, let not any corroding anticipations destroy your present happiness: fear not; but, on the arrival of your faithful Zastrozzi, expect the earnest of the happiness which you wish to enjoy for ever.”

Thus saying, departed, and Matilda retraced her steps to her castella.

Amid the delight, the ecstasy, for which her soul had so long panted — amid the embraces of him whom she had fondly supposed alone to constitute all terrestrial happiness, racking, corroding thoughts possessed Matilda’s bosom.

Deeply musing on schemes of future delight — delight established by the gratification of most diabolical revenge, her eyes fixed upon the ground, heedless what path she pursued, Matilda advanced along the forest.

A voice aroused her from her reverie — it was Verezzi’s — the well-known, the tenderly-adored tone, struck upon her senses forcibly: she started, and, hastening towards him, soon allayed those fears which her absence had excited in the fond heart of her spouse, and on which account he had anxiously quitted the castella to search for her.

Joy, rapturous, ecstatic happiness, untainted by fear, unpolluted by reflection, reigned for six days in Matilda’s bosom.

Five days passed away, the sixth arrived, and, when the evening came, Matilda, with eager and impatient steps, sought the forest.

The evening was gloomy, dense vapours overspread the air; the wind, low and hollow, sighed mournfully in the gigantic pine trees, and whispered in low hissings among the withered shrubs which grew on the rocky prominences.

Matilda waited impatiently for the arrival of . At last his towering form emerged from an interstice in the rocks.

He advanced towards her.

“Success! Victory! my Matilda,” exclaimed , in an accent of exultation —”Julia is—”

“You need add no more,” interrupted Matilda: “kind, excellent , I thank thee; but yet do say how you destroyed her — tell me by what racking, horrible torments, you launched her soul into eternity. Did she perish by the dagger’s point? or did the torments of poison send her, writhing in agony, to the tomb.”

“Yes,” replied ; “she fell at my feet, overpowered by resistless convulsions. Who more ready than myself to restore the Marchesa’s fleeted senses — who more ready than myself to account for her fainting, by observing, that the heat of the assembly had momentarily overpowered her. But Julia’s senses were fled for ever; and it was not until the swiftest gondola in Venice had borne me far towards your castella, that il consiglio di dieci searched for, without discovering the offender.

“Here I must remain; for, were I discovered, the fatal consequences to us both are obvious. Farewell for the present,” added he, “meanwhile happiness attend you; but go not to Venice.”

“Where have you been so late, my love?” tenderly inquired Verezzi as she returned. “I fear lest the night air, particularly that of so damp an evening as this, might affect your health.”

“No, no, my dearest Verezzi, it has not,” hesitatingly answered Matilda.

“You seem pensive, you seem melancholy, my Matilda,” said Verezzi: “lay open your heart to me. I am afraid something, of which I am ignorant, presses upon your bosom.

“Is it the solitude of this remote castella which represses the natural gaiety of your soul? Shall we go to Venice?”

“Oh! no, no!” hastily and eagerly interrupted Matilda: “not to Venice — we must not go to Venice.”

Verezzi was slightly surprised, but imputing her manner to indisposition, it passed off.

Unmarked by events of importance, a month passed away. Matilda’s passion, unallayed by satiety, unconquered by time, still raged with its former fierceness — still was every earthly delight centred in Verezzi; and,

in the air-drawn visions of her imagination, she portrayed to herself that this happiness would last for ever.

It was one evening that Verezzi and Matilda sat, happy in the society of each other, that a servant entering, presented the latter with a sealed paper.

The contents were: “Matilda Contessa di Laurentini is summoned to appear before the holy inquisition — to appear before its tribunal, immediately on the receipt of this summons.”

Matilda’s cheek, as she read it, was blanched with terror. The summons — the fatal, irresistible summons, struck her with chilly awe. She attempted to thrust it into her bosom; but, unable to conceal her terror, she essayed to rush from the apartment — but it was in vain: her trembling limbs refused to support her, and she sank fainting on the floor.

Verezzi raised her — he restored her fleeting senses; he cast himself at her feet, and in the tenderest, most pathetic accents, demanded the reason of her alarm. “And if,” said he, “it is any thing of which I have unconsciously been guilty — if it is any thing in my conduct which has offended you, oh! how soon, how truly would I repent. Dearest Matilda, I adore you to madness: tell me then quickly — confide in one who loves you as I do.”

“Rise, Verezzi,” exclaimed Matilda, in a tone expressive of serene horror: “and since the truth can no longer be concealed, peruse that letter.”

She presented him the fatal summons. He eagerly snatched it: breathless with impatience, he opened it. But what words can express the consternation of the affrighted Verezzi, as the summons, mysterious and inexplicable to him, pressed upon his straining eye-ball. For an instant he stood fixed in mute and agonising thought. At last, in the forced serenity of despair, he demanded what was to be done.

Matilda answered not; for her soul, borne on the pinions of anticipation, at that instant portrayed to itself ignominious and agonising dissolution.

“What is to be done?” again, in a deeper tone of despair, demanded Verezzi.

“We must instantly to Venice,” returned Matilda, collecting her scattered faculties: “we must to Venice; there, I believe, we may be safe. But in some remote corner of the city we must for the present fix our habitations: we must condescend to curtail our establishment; and, above all, we must avoid particularity. But will my Verezzi descend from the rank of life in which his birth has placed him, and with the outcast Matilda’s fortunes quit grandeur?”

“Matilda! dearest Matilda!” exclaimed Verezzi, “talk not thus; you know I am ever yours; you know I love you, and with you, could conceive a cottage elysium.”

Matilda’s eyes flushed with momentary triumph as Verezzi spoke thus, amid the alarming danger which impended her: under the displeasure of the inquisition, whose motives for prosecution are inscrutable, whose decrees are without appeal, her soul, in the possession of all it held dear on earth, secure of Verezzi’s affection, thrilled with pleasurable emotions, yet not unmixed with alarm.

She now prepared to depart. Taking, therefore, out of all her domestics, but the faithful Ferdinand, Matilda, accompanied by Verezzi, although the evening was far advanced, threw herself into a chariot, and leaving every one at the castella unacquainted with her intentions, took the road through the forest which led to Venice.

The convent bell, almost inaudible from distance, tolled ten as the carriage slowly ascended a steep which rose before it.

“But how do you suppose, my Matilda,” said Verezzi, “that it will be possible for us to evade the scrutiny of the inquisition?”

“Oh!” returned Matilda, “we must not appear in our true characters — we must disguise them.”

“But,” inquired Verezzi, “what crime do you suppose the inquisition to allege against you?”

“Heresy, I suppose,” said Matilda. “You know, an enemy has nothing to do but lay an accusation of heresy against any unfortunate and innocent individual, and the victim expires in horrible tortures, or lingers the wretched remnant of his life in dark and solitary cells.”

A convulsive sigh heaved Verezzi’s bosom.

“And is that then to be my Matilda’s destiny?” he exclaimed in horror. “No — Heaven will never permit such excellence to suffer.”

Meanwhile they had arrived at the Brenta. The Brenta’s stream glided silently beneath the midnight breeze towards the Adriatic.

Towering poplars, which loftily raised their spiral forms on its bank, cast a gloomier shade upon the placid wave.

Matilda and Verezzi entered a gondola, and the grey tints of approaching morn had streaked the eastern ether, before they entered the grand canal at Venice; and passing the Rialto, proceeded onwards to a small, though not inelegant mansion, in the eastern suburbs.

Every thing here, though not grand, was commodious; and as they entered it, Verezzi expressed his approbation of living here retired.

Seemingly secure from the scrutiny of the inquisition, Matilda and Verezzi passed some days of uninterrupted happiness.

At last, one evening Verezzi, tired even with monotony of ecstasy, proposed to Matilda to take the gondola, and go to a festival which was to be celebrated at St. Mark’s Place.

CHAPTER XIV.

The evening was serene. — Fleecy clouds floated on the horizon — the moon's full orb, in cloudless majesty, hung high in air, and was reflected in silver brilliancy by every wave of the Adriatic, as, gently agitated by the evening breeze, they dashed against innumerable gondolas which crowded the Laguna.

Exquisite harmony, borne on the pinions of the tranquil air, floated in varying murmurs: it sometimes died away, and then again swelling louder, in melodious undulations softened to pleasure every listening ear.

Every eye which gazed on the fairy scene beamed with pleasure; unrepressed gaiety filled every heart but Julia's, as with a vacant stare, unmoved by feelings of pleasure, unagitated by the gaiety which filled every other soul, she contemplated the varied scene. A magnificent gondola carried the Marchesa di Strobazzo; and the innumerable flambeaux which blazed around her rivalled the meridian sun.

It was the pensive, melancholy Julia, who, immersed in thought, sat unconscious of every external object, whom the fierce glance of Matilda measured with a haughty expression of surprise and revenge. The dark fire which flashed from her eye, more than told the feelings of her soul, as she fixed it on her rival; and had it possessed the power of the basilisk's, Julia would have expired on the spot.

It was the ethereal form of the now forgotten Julia which first caught Verezzi's eye. For an instant he gazed with surprise upon her symmetrical figure, and was about to point her out to Matilda, when, in the downcast countenance of the enchanting female, he recognised his long-lost Julia.

To paint the feelings of Verezzi — as Julia raised her head from the attitude in which it was fixed, and disclosed to his view that countenance which he had formerly gazed on in ecstasy, the index of that soul to which he had sworn everlasting fidelity — is impossible.

The Lethean torpor, as it were, which before had benumbed him; the charm, which had united him to Matilda, was dissolved.

All the air-built visions of delight, which had but a moment before floated in gay variety in his enraptured imagination, faded away, and, in place of these, regret, horror, and despairing repentance, reared their heads amid the roses of momentary voluptuousness.

He still gazed entranced, but Julia's gondola, indistinct from distance, mocked his straining eyeball.

For a time neither spoke: the gondola rapidly passed onwards, but, immersed in thought, Matilda and Verezzi heeded not its rapidity.

They had arrived at St. Mark's Place, and the gondolier's voice, as he announced it, was the first interruption of the silence.

They started. — Verezzi now, for the first time, aroused from his reverie of horror, saw that the scene before him was real; and that the oaths of fidelity which he had so often and so fervently sworn to Julia were broken.

The extreme of horror seized his brain — a frigorific torpidity of despair chilled every sense, and his eyes, fixedly, gazed on vacancy.

"Oh! return — instantly return!" impatiently replied Matilda to the question of the gondolier.

The gondolier, surprised, obeyed her, and they returned.

The spacious canal was crowded with gondolas; merriment and splendour reigned around, enchanting harmony stole over the scene; but, listless of the music, heeding not the splendour, Matilda sat lost in a maze of thought.

Fiercest vengeance revelled through her bosom, and, in her own mind, she resolved a horrible purpose.

Meanwhile, the hour was late, the moon had gained the zenith, and poured her beams vertically on the unruffled Adriatic, when the gondola stopped before Matilda's mansion.

A sumptuous supper had been prepared for their return. Silently Matilda entered — silently Verezzi followed.

Without speaking, Matilda seated herself at the supper table: Verezzi, with an air of listlessness, threw himself into a chair beside her.

For a time neither spoke.

"You are not well to-night," at last stammered out Verezzi: "what has disturbed you?"

"Disturbed me!" repeated Matilda: "why do you suppose that any thing has disturbed me?"

A more violent paroxysm of horror seemed now to seize Verezzi's brain. He pressed his hand to his burning forehead — the agony of his mind was too great to be concealed — Julia's form, as he had last seen her, floated in his fancy, and, overpowered by the resistlessly horrible ideas which pressed

upon them, his senses failed him: he faintly uttered Julia's name — he sank forward, and his throbbing temples reclined on the table.

"Arise! awake! prostrate, perjured Verezzi, awake!" exclaimed the infuriate Matilda, in a tone of gloomy horror.

Verezzi started up, and gazed with surprise upon the countenance of Matilda, which, convulsed by passion, flashed desperation and revenge.

"'Tis plain," said Matilda, gloomily, "'tis plain, he loves me not."

A confusion of contending emotions battled in Verezzi's bosom: his marriage vow — his faith plighted to Matilda — convulsed his soul with indescribable agony.

Still did she possess a great empire over his soul — still was her frown terrible — and still did the hapless Verezzi tremble at the tones of her voice, as, in a phrensy of desperate passion, she bade him quit her for ever: "And," added she, "go, disclose the retreat of the outcast Matilda to her enemies; deliver me to the inquisition, that a union with her you detest may fetter you no longer."

Exhausted by breathless agitation, Matilda ceased: the passions of her soul flashed from her eyes; ten thousand conflicting emotions battled in Verezzi's bosom; he knew scarce what to do; but, yielding to the impulse of the moment, he cast himself at Matilda's feet, and groaned deeply.

At last the words, "I am ever yours, I ever shall be yours," escaped his lips.

For a time Matilda stood immoveable. At last she looked on Verezzi; she gazed downwards upon his majestic and youthful figure; she looked upon his soul-illumined countenance, and tenfold love assailed her softened soul. She raised him — in an oblivious delirium of sudden fondness she clasped him to her bosom, and, in wild and hurried expressions, asserted her right to his love.

Her breast palpitated with fiercest emotions; she pressed her burning lips to his; most fervent, most voluptuous sensations of ecstasy revelled through her bosom.

Verezzi caught the infection; in an instant of oblivion, every oath of fidelity which he had sworn to another, like a baseless cloud, dissolved away; a Lethean torpor crept over his senses; he forgot Julia, or remembered her only as an uncertain vision, which floated before his fancy more as an ideal being of another world, whom he might hereafter adore

there, than as an enchanting and congenial female, to whom his oaths of eternal fidelity had been given.

Overcome by unutterable transports of returning bliss, she started from his embrace — she seized his hand — her face was overspread with a heightened colour as she pressed it to her lips.

"And are you then mine — mine for ever?" rapturously exclaimed Matilda.

"Oh! I am thine — thine to all eternity," returned the infatuated Verezzi: "no earthly power shall sever us; joined by congeniality of soul, united by a bond to which God himself bore witness."

He again clasped her to his bosom — again, as an earnest of fidelity, imprinted a fervent kiss on her glowing cheek; and, overcome by the violent and resistless emotions of the moment, swore, that nor heaven nor hell should cancel the union which he here solemnly and unequivocally renewed.

Verezzi filled an overflowing goblet.

"Do you love me?" inquired Matilda.

"May the lightning of heaven consume me, if I adore thee not to distraction! may I be plunged in endless torments, if my love for thee, celestial Matilda, endures not for ever!"

Matilda's eyes flashed fiercest triumph; the exultingly delightful feelings of her soul were too much for utterance — she spoke not, but gazed fixedly on Verezzi's countenance.

CHAPTER XV.

That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
The effect and it. Come to my woman's breasts.
And take my milk for gall, ye murd'ring ministers.
Wherever, in your sightless substances.
Ye wait on nature's mischief.
— Macbeth.

Verezzi raised the goblet which he had just filled, and exclaimed, in an impassioned tone —

"My adored Matilda! this is to thy happiness — this is to thy every wish; and if I cherish a single thought which centres not in thee, may the most horrible tortures which ever poisoned the peace of man, drive me instantly to distraction. God of heaven! witness thou my oath, and write it in letters never to be erased! Ministering spirits, who watch over the happiness of mortals, attend! for here I swear eternal fidelity, indissoluble, unalterable affection to Matilda!"

He said — he raised his eyes towards heaven — he gazed upon Matilda. Their eyes met — hers gleamed with a triumphant expression of unbounded love.

Verezzi raised the goblet to his lips — when, lo! on a sudden he dashed it to the ground — his whole frame was shook by horrible convulsions — his glaring eyes, starting from their sockets, rolled wildly around: seized with sudden madness, he drew a dagger from his girdle, and with fellest intent raised it high —

What phantom blasted Verezzi's eyeball! what made the impassioned lover dash a goblet to the ground, which he was about to drain as a pledge of eternal love to the choice of his soul! and why did he, infuriate, who had, but an instant before, imagined Matilda's arms an earthly paradise, attempt to rush unprepared into the presence of his Creator! — It was the mildly-beaming eyes of the lovely but forgotten Julia, which spoke reproaches to the soul of Verezzi — it was her celestial countenance, shaded by dishevelled ringlets, which spoke daggers to the false one; for, when he had raised the goblet to his lips — when, sublimed by the maddening fire of

voluptuousness to the height of enthusiastic passion, he swore indissoluble fidelity to another — Julia stood before him!

Madness — fiercest madness — revelled through his brain. He raised the poniard high, but Julia rushed forwards, and, in accents of desperation, in a voice of alarmed tenderness, besought him to spare the dagger from his bosom — it was stained with his life's-blood, which trickled fast from the point to the floor. She raised it on high, and impiously called upon the God of nature to doom her to endless torments, should Julia survive her vengeance.

She advanced towards her victim, who lay bereft of sense on the floor: she shook her rudely, and grasping a handful of her dishevelled hair, raised her from the earth.

"Knowest thou me?" exclaimed Matilda, in frantic passion—"knowest thou the injured Laurentini? Behold this dagger, reeking with my husband's blood — behold that pale corse, in whose now cold breast, thy accursed image revelling, impelled to commit the deed which deprives me of happiness for ever."

Julia's senses, roused by Matilda's violence, returned. She cast her eyes upwards, with a timid expression of apprehension, and beheld the infuriate Matilda convulsed by fiercest passion, and a blood-stained dagger raised aloft, threatening instant death.

"Die! detested wretch," exclaimed Matilda, in a paroxysm of rage, as she violently attempted to bathe the stiletto in the life-blood of her rival; but Julia starting aside, the weapon slightly wounded her neck, and the ensanguined stream stained her alabaster bosom.

She fell on the floor, but suddenly starting up, attempted to escape her bloodthirsty persecutor.

Nerved anew by this futile attempt to escape her vengeance, the ferocious Matilda seized Julia's floating hair, and holding her back with fiend-like strength, stabbed her in a thousand places; and, with exulting pleasure, again and again buried the dagger to the hilt in her body, even after all remains of life were annihilated.

At last the passions of Matilda, exhausted by their own violence, sank into a deadly calm: she threw the dagger violently from her, and contemplated the terrific scene before her with a sullen gaze.

Before her, in the arms of death, lay him on whom her hopes of happiness seemed to have formed so firm a basis.

Before her lay her rival, pierced with innumerable wounds, whose head reclined on Verezzi's bosom, and whose angelic features, even in death, a smile of affection pervaded.

There she herself stood, an isolated guilty being. A fiercer paroxysm of passion now seized her: in an agony of horror, too great to be described, she tore her hair in handfuls — she blasphemed the power who had given her being, and imprecated eternal torments upon the mother who had born her.

"And is it for this," added the ferocious Matilda—"is it for horror, for torments such as these, that He, whom monks call all-merciful, has created me?"

She seized the dagger which lay on the floor.

"Ah! friendly dagger," she exclaimed, in a voice of fiend-like horror, "would that thy blow produced annihilation! with what pleasure then would I clasp thee to my heart!"

She raised it high — she gazed on it — the yet warm blood of the innocent Julia trickled from its point.

The guilty Matilda shrunk at death — she let fall the up-raised dagger — her sou had caught a glimpse of the misery which awaits the wicked hereafter, and, spite of her contempt of religion — spite of her, till now, too firm dependence on the doctrines of atheism, she trembled at futurity; and a voice from within which whispers "thou shalt never die!" spoke daggers to Matilda's soul.

Whilst thus she stood entranced in a delirium of despair, the night wore away, and the domestic who attended her, surprised at the unusual hour to which they had prolonged the banquet, came to announce the lateness of the hour; but opening the door, and perceiving Matilda's garments stained with blood, she started back with affright, without knowing the full extent of horror which the chamber contained, and alarmed the other domestics with an account that Matilda had been stabbed.

In a crowd they all came to the door, but started back in terror when they saw Verezzi and Julia stretched lifeless on the floor.

Summoning fortitude from despair, Matilda loudly called for them to return; but fear and horror overbalanced her commands, and, wild with affright, they all rushed from the chamber, except Ferdinand, who advanced to Matilda, and demanded an explanation.

Matilda gave it, in few and hurried words.

Ferdinand again quitted the apartment, and told the credulous domestics, that an unknown female had surprised Verezzi and Matilda; that she had stabbed Verezzi, and then committed suicide.

The crowd of servants, as in mute terror they listened to Ferdinand's account, entertained not a doubt of the truth. — Again and again they demanded an explanation of the mysterious affair, and employed their wits in conjecturing what might be the cause of it; but the more they conjectured, the more were they puzzled; till at last a clever fellow, named Pietro, who, hating Ferdinand on account of the superior confidence with which his lady treated him, and supposing more to be concealed in this affair than met the ear, gave information to the police, and, before morning, Matilda's dwelling was surrounded by a party of officials belonging to il consiglio di dieci.

Loud shouts rent the air as the officials attempted the entrance. Matilda still was in the apartment where, during the night, so bloody a tragedy had been acted; still in speechless horror was she extended on the sofa, when a loud rap at the door aroused the horror-tranced wretch. She started from the sofa in wildest perturbation, and listened attentively. Again was the noise repeated, and the officials rushed in.

They searched every apartment; at last they entered that in which Matilda, motionless with despair, remained.

Even the stern officials, hardy, unfeeling as they were, started back with momentary horror as they beheld the fair countenance of the murdered Julia; fair even in death, and her body disfigured with numberless ghastly wounds.

"This cannot be suicide," muttered one, who, by his superior manner, seemed to be their chief, as he raised the fragile form of Julia from the ground, and the blood, scarcely yet cold, trickled from her vestments.

"Put your orders in execution," added he.

Two officials advanced towards Matilda, who, standing apart with seeming tranquillity, awaited their approach.

"What wish you with me?" exclaimed Matilda haughtily.

The officials answered not; but their chief, drawing a paper from his vest, which contained an order for the arrest of Matilda La Contessa di Laurentini, presented it to her.

She turned pale; but, without resistance, obeyed the mandate, and followed the officials in silence to the canal, where a gondola waited, and in a short time she was in the gloomy prisons of il consiglio di dieci.

A little straw was the bed of the haughty Laurentini; a pitcher of water and bread was her sustenance; gloom, horror, and despair pervaded her soul: all the pleasures which she had but yesterday tasted; all the ecstatic blisses which her enthusiastic soul had painted for futurity, like the unreal vision of a dream, faded away; and, confined in a damp and narrow cell, Matilda saw that all her hopes of future delight would end in speedy and ignominious dissolution.

Slow passed the time — slow did the clock at St. Mark's toll the revolving hours as languidly they passed away.

Night came on, and the hour of midnight struck upon Matilda's soul as her death knell.

A noise was heard in the passage which led to the prison.

Matilda raised her head from the wall against which it was reclined, and eagerly listened, as if in expectation of an event which would seal her future fate. She still gazed, when the chains of the entrance were unlocked. The door, as it opened, grated harshly on its hinges, and two officials entered.

"Follow me," was the laconic injunction which greeted her terror-struck ear.

Trembling, Matilda arose: her limbs, stiffened by confinement, almost refused to support her; but collecting fortitude from desperation, she followed the relentless officials in silence.

One of them bore a lamp, whose rays darting in uncertain columns, showed, by strong contrasts of light and shade, the extreme massiness of the passages.

The Gothic frieze above was worked with art; and the corbels, in various and grotesque forms, jutted from the tops of clustered pilasters.

They stopped at a door. Voices were heard from within: their hollow tones filled Matilda's soul with unconquerable tremours. But she summoned all her resolution — she resolved to be collected during the trial; and even, if sentenced to death, to meet her fate with fortitude, that the populace, as they gazed, might not exclaim—"The poor Laurentini dared not to die."

These thoughts were passing in her mind during the delay which was occasioned by the officials conversing with another whom they met there.

At last they ceased — an uninterrupted silence reigned: the immense folding doors were thrown open, and disclosed to Matilda's view a vast and lofty apartment. In the centre, was a table, which a lamp, suspended from

the centre, overhung, and where two stern-looking men, habited in black vestments, were seated.

Scattered papers covered the table, with which the two men in black seemed busily employed.

Two officials conducted Matilda to the table where they sat, and, retiring, left her there.

CHAPTER XVI.

Fear, for their scourge, mean villains have;
Thou art the torturer of the brave.
Marmion.

One of the inquisitors raised his eyes; he put back the papers which he was examining, and in a solemn tone asked her name.

“My name is Matilda; my title La Contessa di Laurentini,” haughtily she answered; “nor do I know the motive for that inquiry, except it were to exult over my miseries, which you are, I suppose, no stranger to.”

“Waste not your time,” exclaimed the inquisitor sternly, “in making idle conjectures upon our conduct; but do you know for what you are summoned here?”

“No,” replied Matilda.

“Swear that you know not for what crime you are here imprisoned,” said the inquisitor.

Matilda took the oath required. As she spoke, a dewy sweat burst from her brow, and her limbs were convulsed by the extreme of horror, yet the expression of her countenance was changed not.

“What crime have you committed which might subject you to the notice of this tribunal?” demanded he, in a determined tone of voice.

Matilda gave no answer, save a smile of exulting scorn. She fixed her regards upon the inquisitor: her dark eyes flashed fiercely, but she spoke not.

“Answer me,” exclaimed he, “what to confess might save both of us needless trouble.”

Matilda answered not, but gazed in silence upon the inquisitor’s countenance.

He stamped thrice — four officials rushed in, and stood at some distance from Matilda.

“I am unwilling,” said the inquisitor, “to treat a female of high birth with indignity; but if you confess not instantly, my duty will not permit me to withhold the question.”

A deeper expression of contempt shaded Matilda’s beautiful countenance: she frowned, but answered not.

“You will persist in this foolish obstinacy?” exclaimed the inquisitor. —”Officials, do your duty.”

Instantly the four, who till now had stood in the back-ground, rushed forwards: they seized Matilda, and bore her into the obscurity of the apartment.

Her dishevelled ringlets floated in negligent luxuriance over her alabaster bosom: her eyes, the contemptuous glance of which had now given way to a confused expression of alarm, were almost closed; and her symmetrical form, as borne away by the four officials, looked interestingly lovely.

The other inquisitor, who, till now, busied by the papers which lay before him, had heeded not Matilda’s examination, raised his eyes, and beholding the form of a female, with a commanding tone of voice, called to the officials to stop.

Submissively they obeyed his order. — Matilda, released from the fell hands of these relentless ministers of justice, advanced to the table.

Her extreme beauty softened the inquisitor who had spoken last. He little thought that, under a form so celestial, so interesting, lurked a heart depraved, vicious as a demon’s.

He therefore mildly addressed her; and telling her that, on some future day, her examination would be renewed, committed her to the care of the officials, with orders to conduct her to an apartment better suited to her rank.

The chamber to which she followed the officials was spacious and well furnished, but large iron bars secured the windows, which were high, and impossible to be forced.

Left again to solitude, again to her own gloomy thoughts — her retrospection but horror and despair — her hopes of futurity none — her fears many and horrible — Matilda’s situation is better conceived than described.

Floating in wild confusion, the ideas which presented themselves to her imagination were too horrible for endurance.

Deprived, as she was, of all earthly happiness, fierce as had been her passion for Verezzi, the disappointment of which sublimed her brain to the most infuriate delirium of resistless horror, the wretched Matilda still shrunk at death — she shrunk at the punishment of those crimes, in whose

perpetration no remorse had touched her soul, for which, even now, she repented not, but as they had deprived her of terrestrial enjoyments.

She thought upon the future state — she thought upon the arguments of against the existence of a Deity: her inmost soul now acknowledged their falsehood, and she shuddered as she reflected that her condition was irretrievable.

Resistless horror revelled through her bosom: in an intensity of racking thought she rapidly paced the apartment; at last, overpowered, she sank upon a sofa.

At last the tumultuous passions, exhausted by their own violence, subsided: the storm, which so lately had agitated Matilda's soul, ceased; a serene calm succeeded, and sleep quickly overcame her faculties.

Confused visions flitted in Matilda's imagination whilst under the influence of sleep; at last they assumed a settled shape.

Strangely brilliant and silvery clouds seemed to flit before her sight: celestial music, enchanting as the harmony of the spheres, serened Matilda's soul, and, for an instant, her situation forgotten, she lay entranced.

On a sudden the music ceased; the azure concavity of heaven seemed to open at the zenith, and a being, whose countenance beamed with unutterable beneficence, descended.

It seemed to be clothed in a transparent robe of flowing silver: its eye scintillated with super-human brilliancy, whilst her dream, imitating reality almost to exactness, caused the entranced Matilda to suppose that it addressed her in these words: —

"Poor sinning Matilda! repent, it is not yet too late. — God's mercy is unbounded. — Repent! and thou mayest yet be saved."

These words yet tingled in Matilda's ears; yet were her eyes lifted to heaven, as if following the visionary phantom who had addressed her in her dream, when, much confused, she arose from the sofa.

A dream so like reality made a strong impression upon Matilda's soul.

The ferocious passions, which so lately had battled fiercely in her bosom, were calmed: she lifted her eyes to heaven: they beamed with an expression of sincerest penitence; for sincerest penitence, at this moment, agonised whilst it calmed Matilda's soul.

"God of mercy! God of heaven!" exclaimed Matilda; "my sins are many and horrible, but I repent."

Matilda knew not how to pray; but God, who from the height of heaven penetrates the inmost thoughts of terrestrial hearts, heard the outcast sinner, as in tears of true and agonising repentance she knelt before him.

She despaired no longer — She confided in the beneficence of her Creator; and, in the hour of adversity, when the firmest heart must tremble at his power, no longer a hardened sinner, demanded mercy. And mercy, by the All-benevolent of heaven, is never refused to those who humbly, yet trusting in his goodness, ask it.

Matilda's soul was filled with a celestial tranquillity. She remained upon her knees in mute and fervent thought: she prayed; and, with trembling, asked forgiveness of her Creator.

No longer did that agony of despair torture her bosom. True, she was ill at ease: remorse for her crimes deeply affected her; and though her hopes of salvation were great, her belief in God and a future state firm, the heavy sighs which burst from her bosom, showed that the arrows of repentance had penetrated deeply.

Several days passed away, during which the conflicting passions of Matilda's soul, conquered by penitence, were mellowed into a fixed and quiet depression.

CHAPTER XVII.

Si fractus illabatur orbis.
Impavidum ferient ruinæ
— Horace.

At last the day arrived, when, exposed to a public trial, Matilda was conducted to the tribunal of il consiglio di dieci.

The inquisitors were not, as before, at a table in the middle of the apartment; but a sort of throne was raised at one end, on which a stern-looking man, whom she had never seen before, sat: a great number of Venetians were assembled, and lined all sides of the apartment.

Many, in black vestments, were arranged behind the superior's throne; among whom Matilda recognised those who had before examined her.

Conducted by two officials, with a faltering step, a pallid cheek, and downcast eye, Matilda advanced to that part of the chamber where sat the superior.

The dishevelled ringlets of her hair floated unconfined over her shoulders: her symmetrical and elegant form was enveloped in a thin white robe.

The expression of her sparkling eyes was downcast and humble; yet, seemingly unmoved by the scene before her, she remained in silence at the tribunal.

The curiosity and pity of every one, as they gazed on the loveliness of the beautiful culprit, was strongly excited.

"Who is she? who is she?" ran in inquiring whispers round the apartment. — No one could tell.

Again deep silence reigned — not a whisper interrupted the appalling calm.

At last the superior, in a sternly solemn voice, said —

"Matilda Contessa di Laurentini, you are here arraigned on the murder of La Marchesa di Strobazzo: canst thou deny it? canst thou prove to the contrary? My ears are open to conviction. Does no one speak for the accused?"

He ceased: uninterrupted silence reigned. Again he was about — again, with a look of detestation and horror, he had fixed his penetrating eye upon

the trembling Matilda, and had unclosed his mouth to utter the fatal sentence, when his attention was arrested by a man who rushed from the crowd, and exclaimed, in a hurried tone —

"La Contessa di Laurentini is innocent." "Who are you, who dare assert that?" exclaimed the superior, with an air of doubt.

"I am," answered he, "Ferdinand Zeilnitz, a German, the servant of La Contessa di Laurentini, and I dare assert that she is innocent."

"Your proof," exclaimed the superior, with a severe frown.

"It was late," answered Ferdinand, "when I entered the apartment, and then I beheld two bleeding bodies, and La Contessa di Laurentini, who lay bereft of sense on the sofa."

"Stop!" exclaimed the superior.

Ferdinand obeyed.

The superior whispered to one in black vestments, and soon four officials entered, bearing on their shoulders an open coffin.

The superior pointed to the ground: the officials deposited their burden, and produced, to the terror-struck eyes of the gazing multitude, Julia, the lovely Julia, covered with innumerable and ghastly gashes.

All present uttered a cry of terror — all started, shocked and amazed, from the horrible sight; yet some, recovering themselves, gazed at the celestial loveliness of the poor victim to revenge, which, unsubdued by death, still shone from her placid features.

A deep-drawn sigh heaved Matilda's bosom; tears, spite of all her firmness, rushed into her eyes; and she had nearly fainted with dizzy horror; but, overcoming it, and collecting all her fortitude, she advanced towards the corse of her rival, and, in the numerous wounds which covered it, saw the fiat of her future destiny.

She still gazed on it — a deep silence reigned — not one of the spectators, so interested were they, uttered a single word — not a whisper was heard through the spacious apartment.

"Stand off! guilt-stained, relentless woman," at last exclaimed the superior fiercely: "is it not enough that you have persecuted, through life, the wretched female who lies before you — murdered by you? Cease, therefore, to gaze on her with looks as if your vengeance was yet insatiated. But retire, wretch: officials, take her into your custody; meanwhile, bring the other prisoner."

Two officials rushed forward, and led Matilda to some distance from the tribunal; four others entered, leading a man of towering height and majestic figure. The heavy chains with which his legs were bound, rattled as he advanced.

Matilda raised her eyes — stood before her.

She rushed forwards — the officials stood unmoved.

“Oh, !” she exclaimed—”dreadful, wicked has been the tenour of our life; base, ignominious, will be its termination: unless we repent, fierce, horrible, may be the eternal torments which will rack us, ere four and twenty hours are elapsed. Repent then, Zastrozzi; repent! and as you have been my companion in apostasy to virtue, follow me likewise in dereliction of stubborn and determined wickedness.”

This was pronounced in a low and faltering voice.

“Matilda,” replied , whilst a smile of contemptuous atheism played over his features—”Matilda, fear not: fate wills us to die: and I intend to meet death, to encounter annihilation, with tranquillity. Am I not convinced of the non-existence of a Deity? am I not convinced that death will but render this soul more free, more unfettered? Why need I then shudder at death? why need any one, whose mind has risen above the shackles of prejudice, the errors of a false and injurious superstition.”

Here the superior interposed, and declared he could allow private conversation no longer.

Quitting Matilda, therefore, , unappalled by the awful scene before him, unshaken by the near approach of agonising death, which he now fully believed he was about to suffer, advanced towards the superior’s throne.

Every one gazed on the lofty stature of , and admired his dignified mein and dauntless composure, even more than they had the beauty of Matilda.

Every one gazed in silence, and expected that some extraordinary charge would be brought against him.

The name of , pronounced by the superior, had already broken the silence, when the culprit, gazing disdainfully on his judge, told him to be silent, for he would spare him much needless trouble.

“I am a murderer,” exclaimed ; “I deny it not: I buried my dagger in the heart of him who injured me; but the motives which led me to be an assassin were at once excellent and meritorious; for I swore, at a loved mother’s death-bed, to revenge her betrayer’s falsehood.

“Think you, that whilst I perpetrated the deed I feared the punishment? or whilst I revenged a parent’s cause, that the futile torments which I am doomed to suffer here, had any weight in my determination? No — no. If the vile deceiver, who brought my spotless mother to a tomb of misery, fell beneath the dagger of one who swore to revenge her — if I sent him to another world, who destroyed the peace of one I loved more than myself in this, am I to be blamed?”

ceased, and, with an expression of scornful triumph, folded his arms.

“Go on!” exclaimed the superior.

“Go on! go on!” echoed from every part of the immense apartment.

He looked around him. His manner awed the tumultuous multitude; and, in uninterrupted silence, the spectators gazed upon the unappalled , who, towering as a demi-god, stood in the midst.

“Am I then called upon,” said he, “to disclose things which bring painful remembrances to my mind? Ah! how painful! But no matter; you shall know the name of him who fell beneath this arm: you shall know him, whose memory, even now, I detest more than I can express. I care not who knows my actions, convinced as I am, and convinced to all eternity as I shall be, of their rectitude. — Know, then, that Olivia was my mother; a woman in whom every virtue, every amiable and excellent quality, I firmly believe to have been centred.

“The father of him who by my arts committed suicide but six days ago in La Contessa di Laurentini’s mansion, took advantage of a moment of weakness, and disgraced her who bore me. He swore with the most sacred oaths to marry her — but he was false.

“My mother soon brought me into the world — the seducer married another; and when the destitute Olivia begged a pittance to keep her from starving, her proud betrayer spurned her from his door, and tauntingly bade her exercise her profession. — The crime I committed with thee, perjured one! exclaimed my mother as she left his door, shall be my last! — and, by heavens! she acted nobly. A victim to falsehood, she sank early to the tomb, and, ere her thirtieth year, she died — her spotless soul fled to eternal happiness. — Never shall I forget, though but fourteen when she died — never shall I forget her last commands. — My son, said she, my Pietrino, revenge my wrongs — revenge them on the perjured Verezzi — revenge them on his progeny for ever.

“And, by heaven! I think I have revenged them. Ere I was twenty-four, the false villain, though surrounded by seemingly impenetrable grandeur; though forgetful of the offence to punish which this arm was nerved, sank beneath my dagger. But I destroyed his body alone,” added , with a terrible look of insatiated vengeance: “time has taught me better: his son’s soul is hell-doomed to all eternity: he destroyed himself; but my machinations, though unseen, effected his destruction.

“Matilda di Laurentini! Hah! why do you shudder?. When, with repeated stabs, you destroyed her who now lies lifeless before you in her coffin, did you not reflect upon what must be your fate? You have enjoyed him whom you adored — you have even been married to him — and, for the space of more than a month, have tasted unutterable joys, and yet you are unwilling to pay the price of your happiness — by heavens I am not!” added he, bursting into a wild laugh.—”Ah! poor fool, Matilda, did you think it was from friendship I instructed you how to gain Verezzi? — No, no — it was revenge which induced me to enter into your schemes with zeal; which induced me to lead her, whose lifeless form lies yonder, to your house, foreseeing the effect it would have upon the strong passions of your husband.

“And now,” added , “I have been candid with you. Judge, pass your sentence — but I know my doom; and, instead of horror, experience some degree of satisfaction at the arrival of death, since all I have to do on earth is completed.”

ceased; and, unappalled, fixed his expressive gaze upon the superior.

Surprised at ‘s firmness, and shocked at the crimes of which he had made so unequivocal an avowal, the superior turned away in horror.

Still stood unmoved, and fearlessly awaited the fiat of his destiny.

The superior whispered to one in black vestments. Four officials rushed in, and placed on the rack.

Even whilst writhing under the agony of almost insupportable torture his nerves were stretched, ‘s firmness failed him not; but, upon his soul-illumined countenance, played a smile of most disdainful scorn; and with a wild convulsive laugh of exulting revenge — he died.

THE END

ST IRVYNE; OR, THE ROSICRUCIAN

This gothic novel was written in 1810 and anonymously published by John Joseph Stockdale in 1811, who advertised it as being written "by a Gentleman of the University of Oxford". The narrative introduces Wolfstein, a solitary wanderer in the Swiss Alps, who encounters Ginotti, an alchemist of the Rose Cross Order seeking to impart the secret of immortality.

Originally intended to be written in three volumes, Shelley ended the novel abruptly, deciding not to develop or integrate the two strands of the narrative, resulting with a much shorter work. Contemporary critics attacked the novel, with the conservative British periodical *The Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine* writing in a January 1812 review, "the writer, who can outrage nature and common sense in almost every page of his book." The reviewer then sought to deter readers from "the perusal of unprofitable and vicious productions."

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CHAPTER. I.

Red thunder-clouds, borne on the wings of the midnight whirlwind, floated, at fits, athwart the crimson-coloured orbit of the moon; the rising fierceness of the blast sighed through the stunted shrubs, which, bending before its violence, inclined towards the rocks whereon they grew: over the blackened expanse of heaven, at intervals, was spread the blue lightning's flash; it played upon the granite heights, and, with momentary brilliancy, disclosed the terrific scenery of the Alps, whose gigantic and mishapen summits, reddened by the transitory moon-beam, were crossed by black fleeting fragments of the tempest-clouds. The rain, in big drops, began to descend, and the thunder-peals, with louder and more deafening crash, to shake the zenith, till the long-protracted war, echoing from cavern to cavern, died, in indistinct murmurs, amidst the far-extended chain of mountains. In this scene, then, at this horrible and tempestuous hour, without one existent earthy being whom he might claim as friend, without one resource to which he might fly as an asylum from the horrors of neglect and poverty, stood Wolfstein; — he gazed upon the conflicting elements; his youthful figure reclined against a jutting granite rock; he cursed his wayward destiny, and implored the Almighty of Heaven to permit the thunderbolt, with crash terrific and exterminating, to descend upon his head, that a being useless to himself and to society might no longer, by his existence, mock Him whone'er made aught in vain. "And what so horrible crimes have I committed," exclaimed Wolfstein, driven to impiety by desperation, "what crimes which merit punishment like this? What, what is death? — Ah, dissolution! thy pang is blunted by the hard hand of long-protracted suffering — suffering unspeakable, indescribable!" As thus he spoke, a more terrific paroxysm of excessive despair revelled through every vein; his brain swam around in wild confusion, and, rendered delirious by excess of misery, he started from his flinty seat, and swiftly hastened towards the precipice, which yawned widely beneath his feet. "For what then should I longer drag on the galling chain of existence?" cried Wolfstein; and his impious expression was borne onwards by the hot and sulphurous thunder-blast.

The midnight meteors danced above the gulf upon which Wolfstein wistfully gazed. Palpable, impenetrable darkness seemed to hang upon it;

impenetrable even by the flaming thunderbolt. “Into this then shall I plunge myself?” soliloquized the wretched outcast, “and by one rash act endanger, perhaps, eternal happiness; — deliver myself up, perhaps, to the anticipation and experience of never-ending torments? Art thou the God then, the Creator of the universe, whom canting monks call the God of mercy and forgiveness, and sufferest thou thy creatures to become the victims of tortures such as fate has inflicted on me? — Oh! God, take my soul; why should I longer live?” Thus having spoken, he sank on the rocky bosom of the mountains. Yet, unheeding the exclamations of the maddened Wolfstein, fiercer raged the tempest. The battling elements, in wild confusion, seemed to threaten nature’s dissolution; the ferocious thunderbolt, with impetuous violence, danced upon the mountains, and, collecting more terrific strength, severed gigantic rocks from their else eternal basements; the masses, with sound more frightful than the bursting thunder-peal, dashed towards the valley below. Horror and desolation marked their track. The mountain-rills, swoln by the waters of the sky, dashed with direr impetuosity from the Alpine summits; their foaming waters were hidden in the darkness of midnight, or only became visible when the momentary scintillations of the lightning rested on their whitened waves. Fiercer still than nature’s wildest uproar were the feelings of Wolfstein’s bosom; his frame, at last, conquered by the conflicting passions of his soul, no longer was adequate to sustain the unequal contest, but sank to the earth. His brain swam wildly, and he lay entranced in total insensibility.

What torches are those that dispel the distant darkness of midnight, and gleam, like meteors, athwart the blackness of the tempest? They throw a wavering light over the thickness of the storm: they wind along the mountains: they pass the hollow vallies. Hark! the howling of the blast has ceased, — the thunderbolts have dispersed, but yet reigns darkness. Distant sounds of song are borne on the breeze: the sounds approach. A low bier holds the remains of one whose soul is floating in the regions of eternity: a black pall covers him. Monks support the lifeless clay: others precede, bearing torches, and chanting a requiem for the salvation of the departed one. They hasten towards the convent of the valley, there to deposit the lifeless limbs of one who has explored the frightful path of eternity before them. And now they had arrived where lay Wolfstein: “Alas!” said one of

the monks, “there reclines a wretched traveller. He is dead; murdered, doubtlessly, by the fell bandits who infest these wild recesses.”

They raised from the earth his form: yet his bosom throbbed with the tide of life: returning animation once more illumed his eye: he started on his feet, and wildly inquired why they had awakened him from that slumber which he had hoped to have been eternal. Unconnected were his expressions, strange and impetuous the fire darting from his restless eyeballs. At length, the monks succeeded in calming the desperate tumultuousness of his bosom, calming at least in some degree; for he accepted their proffered tenders of a lodging, and essayed to lull to sleep, for a while, the horrible idea of dereliction which pressed upon his loaded brain.

While thus they stood, loud shouts rent the air, and, before Wolfstein and the monks could well collect their scattered faculties, they found that a troop of Alpine bandits had surrounded them. Trembling, from apprehension, the monks fled every way. None, however, could escape. “What! old greybeards,” cried one of the robbers, “do you suppose that we will permit you to evade us: you who feed upon the strength of the country, in idleness and luxury, and have compelled many of our noble fellows, who otherwise would have been ornaments to their country in peace, thunderbolts to their enemies in war, to seek precarious subsistence as Alpine bandits? If you wish for mercy, therefore, deliver unhesitatingly your joint riches.” The robbers then despoiled the monks of whatever they might adventitiously have taken with them, and, turning to Wolfstein, the apparent chieftain told him to yield his money likewise. Unappalled, Wolfstein advanced towards him. The chief held a torch; its red beams disclosed the expression of stern severity and unyielding loftiness which sate upon the brow of Wolfstein. “Bandit!” he answered fearlessly, “I have none, — no money — no hope — no friends; nor do I care for existence! Now judge if such a man be a fit victim for fear! No! I never trembled!”

A ray of pleasure gleamed in the countenance of the bandit as Wolfstein spoke. Grief, in inerasible traces, sate deeply implanted on the front of the outcast. At last, the chief, advancing to Wolfstein, who stood at some little distance, said, “My companions think that so noble a fellow as you appear to be, would be no unworthy member of our society; and, by Heaven, I am of their opinion. Are you willing to become one of us?”

Wolfstein's dark gaze was fixed upon the grounds his contracted eyebrow evinced deep thought: he started from his reverie, and, without hesitation, consented to their proposal.

Long was it past the hour of midnight when the banditti troop, with their newly-acquired associate, advanced along the pathless Alps. The red glare of the torches which each held, tinged the rocks and pine-trees, through woods of which they occasionally passed, and alone dissipated the darkness of night. Now had they arrived at the summit of a wild and rocky precipice, but the base indeed of another which mingled its far-seen and gigantic outline with the clouds of heaven. A door, which before had appeared part of the solid rock, flew open at the chieftain's touch, and the whole party advanced into the spacious cavern. Over the walls of the lengthened passages putrefaction had spread a bluish clamminess; damps hung around, and, at intervals, almost extinguished the torches, whose glare was scarcely sufficient to dissipate the impenetrable obscurity. After many devious windings they advanced into the body of the cavern: it was spacious and lofty. A blazing wood fire threw its dubious rays upon the mishapen and ill-carved walls. Lamps suspended from the roof, dispersed the subterranean gloom, not so completely however, but that ill-defined shades lurked in the arched distances, whose hollow recesses led to different apartments.

The gang had sate down in the midst of the cavern to supper, which a female, whose former loveliness had left scarce any traces on her cheek, had prepared. The most exquisite and expensive wines apologized for the rusticity of the rest of the entertainment, and induced freedom of conversation, and wild boisterous merriment, which reigned until the bandits, overcome by the fumes of the wine which they had drank, sank to sleep. Wolfstein, left again to solitude and silence, reclining on his mat in a corner of the cavern, retraced, in mental, sorrowing review, the past events of his life: ah! that eventful existence whose fate had dragged the heir of a wealthy potentate in Germany from the lap of luxury and indulgence, to become a vile associate of viler bandits, in the wild and trackless deserts of the Alps. Around their dwelling, lofty inaccessible acclivities reared their barren summits; they echoed to no sound save the wild hoot of the night-raven, or the impatient yelling of the vulture, which hovered on the blast in quest of scanty sustenance. These were the scenes without: noisy revelry and tumultuous riot reigned within. The mirth of the bandits appeared to arise independently of themselves: their hearts were void and dreary.

Wolfstein's limbs pillowed on the flinty bosom of the earth: those limbs which had been wont to recline on the softest, the most luxurious sofas. Driven from his native country by an event which imposed upon him an insuperable barrier to ever again returning thither, possessing no friends, not having one single resource from which he might obtain support, where could the wretch, the exile, seek for an asylum but with those whose fortunes, expectations, and characters were desperate, and marked as darkly, by fate, as his own?

Time fled, and each succeeding day inured Wolfstein more and more to the idea of depriving his fellow-creatures of their possessions. In a short space of time the high-souled and noble Wolfstein, though still high-souled and noble, became an experienced bandit. His magnanimity and courage, even whilst surrounded by the most threatening dangers, and the unappalled expression of countenance with which he defied the dart of death, endeared him to the robbers: whilst with him they all asserted that they felt, as it were, instinctively impelled to deeds of horror and danger, which, otherwise, must have remained unattempted even by the boldest. His was every daring expedition, his the scheme which demanded depth of judgment and promptness of execution. Often, whilst at midnight the band lurked perhaps beneath the overhanging rocks, which were gloomily impended above them, in the midst, perhaps, of one of those horrible tempests whereby the air, in those Alpine regions, is so frequently convulsed, would the countenance of the bandits betray some slight shade of alarm and awe; but that of Wolfstein was fixed, unchanged, by any variation of scenery or action. One day it was when the chief communicated to the banditti, notice which he had received by means of spies, that an Italian Count of immense wealth was journeying from Paris to his native country, and, at a late hour the following evening, would pass the Alps near this place; "They have but few attendants," added he, "and those few will not come this way; the postillion is in our interest, and the horses are to be overcome with fatigue when they approach the destined spot: you understand."

The evening came. "I," said Wolfstein, "will roam into the country, but will return before the arrival of our wealthy victim." Thus saying, he left the cavern, and wandered out amidst the mountains.

It was autumn. The mountain-tops, the scattered oaks which occasionally waved their lightning-blasted heads on the summits of the far-seen piles of rock, were gilded by the setting glory of the sun; the trees, yellowed by the

waning year, reflected a glowing teint from their thick foliage; and the dark pine-groves which were stretched half way up the mountain sides, added a more deepened gloom to the shades of evening, which already began to gather rapidly above the scenery.

It was at this dark and silent hour, that Wolfstein, unheeding the surrounding objects, — objects which might have touched with awe, or heightened to devotion, any other breast, — wandered alone — pensively he wandered — dark images for futurity possessed his soul: he shuddered when he reflected upon what had passed; nor was his present situation calculated to satisfy a mind eagerly panting for liberty and independence. Conscience too, awakened conscience, upbraided him for the life which he had selected, and, with silent whisperings, stung his soul to madness. Oppressed by thoughts such as these, Wolfstein yet proceeded, forgetful that he was to return before the arrival of their destined victim — forgetful indeed was he of every external existence; and absorbed in himself, with arms folded, and eyes fixed upon the earth, he yet advanced. At last he sank on a mossy bank, and, guided by the impulse of the moment, inscribed on a tablet the following lines; for the inaccuracy of which, the perturbation of him who wrote them, may account; he thought of past times while he marked the paper with —

“‘T was dead of the night, when I sat in my dwelling;
One glimmering lamp was expiring and low;
Around, the dark tide of the tempest was swelling.
Along the wild mountains night-ravens were yelling, —
They bodingly presag’d destruction and woe.
‘T was then that I started! — the wild storm was howling.
Nought was seen, save the lightning, which danc’d in the sky;
Above me, the crash of the thunder was rolling.
And low, chilling murmurs, the blast wafted by.
My heart sank within me — unheeded the war
Of the battling clouds, on the mountain-tops, broke; —
Unheeded the thunder-peal crash’d in mine ear —
This heart, hard as iron, is stranger to fear;
But conscience in low, noiseless whispering spoke.
‘T was then that her form on the whirlwind upholding.
The ghost of the murder’d Victoria strode;
In her right hand, a shadowy shroud she was holding.

She swiftly advanc'd to my lonesome abode.
I wildly then call'd on the tempest to bear me—"

Overcome by the wild retrospection of ideal horror, which these swiftly-written lines excited in his soul, Wolfstein tore the paper, on which he had written them, to pieces, and scattered them about him. He arose from his recumbent posture, and again advanced through the forest. Not far had he proceeded, ere a mingled murmur broke upon the silence of night — it was the sound of human voices. An event so unusual in these solitudes, excited Wolfstein's momentary surprise; he started, and looking around him, essayed to discover whence those sounds proceeded. — What was the astonishment of Wolfstein, when he found that a detached party, who had been sent in pursuit of the Count, had actually overtaken him, and, at this instant, were dragging from the carriage the almost lifeless form of a female, whose light symmetrical figure, as it leant on the muscular frame of the robber who supported it, afforded a most striking contrast. — They had, before his arrival, plundered the Count of all his riches, and, enraged at the spirited defence which he had made, had inhumanly murdered him, and cast his lifeless body adown the yawning precipice. Transfixed by a jutting point of granite rock, it remained there to be devoured by the ravens. Wolfstein joined the banditti: and, although he could not recall the deed, lamented the wanton cruelty which had been practised upon the Count. As for the female, whose grace and loveliness made so strong an impression upon him, he demanded that every soothing attention should be paid to her, and his desire was enforced by the commands of the chief, whose dark eye wandered wildly over the beauties of the lovely Megalena de Metastasio, as if he had secretly destined them for himself.

At last they arrived at the cavern; every resource which the cavern of a gang of lawless and desperate villains might afford, was brought forward to restore the fainted Megalena to life: she soon recovered — she slowly opened her eyes, and started with surprise to behold herself surrounded by a rough set of desperadoes, and the gloomy walls of the cavern, upon which darkness hung, awfully visible. Near her sate a female, whose darkened expression of countenance seemed perfectly to correspond with the horror prevalent throughout the cavern; her face, though bearing the marks of an undeniable expression of familiarity with wretchedness, had some slight remains of beauty.

It was long past midnight when each of the robbers withdrew to repose. But his mind was too much occupied by the events of the evening to allow the unhappy Wolfstein to find quiet; — at an early hour he arose from his sleepless couch, to inhale the morning breeze. The sun had but just risen; the scene was beautiful; every thing was still, and seemed to favour that reflection, which even propinquity to his abandoned associates imposed no indefinably insuperable bar to. In spite of his attempts to think upon other subjects, the image of the fair Megalena floated in his mind. Her loveliness had made too deep an impression on it to be easily removed; and the hapless Wolfstein, ever the victim of impulsive feeling, found himself bound to her by ties, more lasting than he had now conceived the transitory tyranny of woe could have imposed. For never had Wolfstein beheld so singularly beautiful a form; — her figure cast in the mould of most exact symmetry; her blue and love-beaming eyes, from which occasionally emanated a wild expression, seemingly almost superhuman; and the auburn hair which hung in unconfined tresses down her damask cheek — formed a resistless tout ensemble.

Heedless of every external object, Wolfstein long wandered. — The protracted sound of the bandits' horn struck at last upon his ear, and aroused him from his reverie. On his return to the cavern, the robbers were assembled at their meal; the chief regarded him with marked and jealous surprise as he entered, but made no remark. They then discussed their uninteresting and monotonous topics, and the meal being ended, each villain departed on his different business.

Megalena, finding herself alone with Agnes (the only woman, save herself, who was in the cavern, and who served as an attendant on the robbers), essayed, by the most humble entreaties and supplications, to excite pity in her breast: she conjured her to explain the cause for which she was thus imprisoned, and wildly inquired for her father. The guilt-bronzed brow of Agnes was contracted by a sullen and malicious frown: it was the only reply which the inhuman female deigned to return. After a pause, however, she said, "Thou thinkest thyself my superior, proud girl; but time may render us equals. — Submit to that, and you may live on the same terms as I do."

There appeared to lurk a meaning in these words, which Megalena found herself incompetent to develope; she answered not, therefore, and suffered Agnes to depart unquestioned. The wretched Megalena, a prey to despair

and terror, endeavoured to revolve in her mind the events which had brought her to this spot, but an unconnected stream of ideas pressed upon her brain. The sole light in her cell was that of a dismal lamp, which, by its uncertain flickering, only dissipated the almost palpable obscurity, in a sufficient degree more assuredly to point out the circumambient horrors. She gazed wistfully around, to see if there were any outlet; none there was, save the door whereby Agnes had entered, which was strongly barred on the outside. In despair she threw herself on the wretched pallet.—"For what cause, then, am I thus entombed alive?" soliloquized the hapless Megalena; "would it not be preferable at once to annihilate the spark of life which burns but faintly within my bosom? — O my father! where art thou? Thy tombless corse, perhaps, is torn into a thousand pieces by the fury of the mountain cataract. — Little didst thou presage misfortunes such as these! — little didst thou suppose that our last journey would have caused thy immature dissolution — my infamy and misery, not to end but with my hapless existence! — Here there is none to comfort me, none to participate my miseries!" Thus speaking, overcome by a paroxysm of emotion, she sank on the bed, and bedewed her fair face with tears.

Whilst, oppressed by painful retrospection, the outcast orphan was yet kneeling, Agnes entered, and, not evén noticing her distress, bade her prepare to come to the banquet where the troop of bandits was assembled. In silence, along the vaulted and gloomy passages, she followed her conductress, from whose stern and forbidding gaze her nature shrunk back enhorrored, till they reached that apartment of the cavern where the revelry waited but for her arrival to commence. On her entering, Cavigni, the chief, led her to a seat on his right hand, and paid her every attention which his froward nature could stoop to exercise towards a female: she received his civilities with apparent complacency; but her eye was frequently fascinated, as it were, towards the youthful Wolfstein, who had caught her attention the evening before. His countenance, spite of the shade of woe with which the hard hand of suffering had marked it, was engaging and beautiful; not that beauty which may be freely acknowledged, but inwardly confessed by every beholder with sensations penetrating and resistless; his figure majestic and lofty, and the fire which flashed from his expressive eye, indefinably to herself, penetrated the inmost soul of the isolated Megalena. Wolfstein regarded Cavigni with indignation and envy; and, though almost ignorant himself of the dreadful purpose of his soul, resolved in his own

mind an horrible deed. Cavigni was enraptured with the beauty of Megalena, and secretly vowed that no paius should be spared to gain to himself the possession of an object so lovely. The anticipated delight of gratified voluptuousness revelled in every vein, as he gazed upon her; his eye flashed with a triumphant expression of lawless love, yet he determined to defer the hour of his happiness till he might enjoy more free, unrestrained delight, with his adored fair one. She gazed on the chief, however, with an ill-concealed aversion; his dark expression of countenance, the haughty severity, and contemptuous frown, which habitually sate on his brow, invited not, but rather repelled a reciprocality of affection, which the haughty chief, after his own attachment, entertained not the most distant doubt of. He was, notwithstanding, conscious of her coldness, but attributing it to virgin modesty, or to the novel situation into which she had suddenly been thrown, paid her every attention; nor did he omit to promise her every little comfort which might induce her to regard him with esteem. Still, though veiled beneath the most artful dissimulation, did the fair Megalena pant ardently for liberty — for, oh! liberty is sweet, sweeter even than all the other pleasures of life, to full satiety, without it.

Cavigni essayed, by every art, to gain her over to his desires; but Megalena, regarding him with aversion, answered with an haughtiness which she was unable to conceal, and which his proud spirit might ill brook. Cavigni could not disguise the vexation which he felt, when, increased by resistance, Megalena's dislike towards him remained no longer a secret: "Megalena," said he, at last, "fair girl, thou shalt be mine — we will be wedded tomorrow, if you think the bands of love not sufficiently forcible to unite us."

"No bands shall ever unite me to you!" exclaimed Megalena. "Even though the grave were to yawn beneath my feet, I would willingly precipitate myself into its gulf, if the alternative of that, or an union with you, were proposed to me."

Rage swelled Cavigni's bosom almost to bursting — the conflicting passions of his soul were too tumultuous for utterance; — in an hurried tone, he commanded Agnes to show Megalena to her cell: she obeyed, and they both quitted the apartment.

Wolfstein's soul, sublimed by the most infuriate paroxysms of contending emotions, battled wildly. His countenance retained, however, but one expression, — it was of dark and deliberate revenge. His stern eye

was fixed upon Cavigni; — he decided at this instant to perpetrate the deed he had resolved on. Leaving his seat, he intimated his intention of quitting the cavern for an instant.

Cavigni had just filled his goblet — Wolfstein, as he passed, dexterously threw a little white powder into the wine of the chief.

When Wolfstein returned, Cavigni had not yet quaffed the deadly draught: rising, therefore, he exclaimed aloud, "Fill your goblets, all." Every one obeyed, and sat in expectation of the toast which he was about to propose.

"Let us drink," he exclaimed, "to the health of the chieftain's bride — let us drink to their mutual happiness." A smile of pleasure irradiated the countenance of the chief: — that he whom he had supposed to be a dangerous rival, should thus publicly forego any claim to the affections of Megalena, was indeed pleasure.

"Health and mutual happiness to the chieftain and his bride!" re-echoed from every part of the table.

Cavigni raised the goblet to his lips: he was about to quaff the tide of death, when Ginotti, one of the robbers, who sat next to him, upreared his arm, and dashed the cup of destruction to the earth. A silence, as if in expectation of some terrible event, reigned throughout the cavern.

Wolfstein turned his eyes towards the chief; — the dark and mysterious gaze of Ginotti arrested his wandering eyeball; its expression was too marked to be misunderstood; — he trembled in his inmost soul, but his countenance yet retained its unchangeable expression. Ginotti spoke not, nor willed he to assign any reason for his extraordinary conduct; the circumstance was shortly forgotten, and the revelry went on undisturbed by any other event.

Ginotti was one of the boldest of the robbers; he was the distinguished favourite of the chief, and, although mysterious and reserved, his society was courted with more eagerness, than such qualities might, abstractedly considered, appear to deserve. None knew his history — that he concealed within the deepest recesses of his bosom; nor could the most suppliant entreaties, or threats of the most horrible punishments, have wrested from him one particular concerning it. Never had he once thrown off the mysterious mask, beneath which his character was veiled, since he had become an associate of the band. In vain the chief required him to assign some reason for his late extravagant conduct; he said it was mere accident,

but with an air, which more than convinced every one, that something lurked behind which yet remained unknown. Such, however, was their respect for Ginotti, that the occurrence passed almost without a comment.

Long now had the hour of midnight gone by, and the bandits had retired to repose. Wolfstein retired too to his couch, but sleep closed not his eyelids; his bosom was a scene of the wildest anarchy; the conflicting passions revelled dreadfully in his burning brain: — love, maddening, excessive, unaccountable idolatry, as it were, which possessed him for Megalena, urged him on to the commission of deeds which conscience represented as beyond measure wicked, and which Ginotti's glance convinced him were by no means unsuspected. Still so unbounded was his love for Megalena (madness rather than love), that it overbalanced every other consideration, and his unappalled soul resolved to persevere in its determination even to destruction!

Cavigni's commands respecting Megalena had been obeyed: — the door of her cell was fastened, and the ferocious chief resolved to let her lie there till the suffering and confinement might subdue her to his will. Megalena endeavoured, by every means, to soften the obdurate heart of her attendant; at length, her mildness of manner induced Agnes to regard her with pity; and before she quitted the cell, they were so far reconciled to each other, that they entered into a comparison of their mutual situations; and Agnes was about to relate to Megalena the circumstances which had brought her to the cavern, when the fierce Cavigni entered, and, commanding Agnes to withdraw, said, "Well, proud girl, are you now in a better humour to return the favour with which your superior regards you?"

"No!" heroically answered Megalena.

"Then," rejoined the chief, "if within four-and-twenty hours you hold yourself not in readiness to return my love, force shall wrest the jewel from its casket." Thus having said, he abruptly quitted the cell.

So far had Wolfstein's proposed toast, at the banquet, gained on the unsuspecting ferociousness of Cavigni, that he accepted the former's artful tender of service, in the way of persuasion with Megalena, supposing, by Wolfstein's manner, that they had been cursorily acquainted before. Wolfstein, therefore, entered the apartment of Megalena.

At the sight of him Megalena arose from her recumbent posture, and hastened joyfully to meet him; for she remembered that Wolfstein had

rescued her from the insults of the banditti, on the eventful evening which had subjected her to their control.

“Lovely, adored girl,” he exclaimed, “short is my time: pardon, therefore, the abruptness of my address. The chief has sent me to persuade you to become united to him; but I love you, I adore you to madness. I am not what I seem. Answer me! — time is short.”

An indefinable sensation, unfelt before, swelled through the passion-quivering frame of Megalena. “Yes, yes,” she cried, “I will — I love you—” At this instant the voice of Cavigni was heard in the passage. Wolfstein started from his knees, and pressing the fair hand presented to his lips with exulting ardour, departed hastily to give an account of his mission to the anxious Cavigni; who restrained himself in the passage without, and, slightly mistrusting Wolfstein, was about to advance to the door of the cell to listen to their conversation, when Wolfstein quitted Megalena.

Megalena, again in solitude, began to reflect upon the scenes which had been lately acted. She thought upon the words of Wolfstein, unconscious wherefore they were a balm to her mind: she reclined upon her wretched pallet. It was now night: her thoughts took a different turn; the melancholy wind sighing along the crevices of the cavern, and the dismal sound of rain which pattered fast, inspired mournful reflection. She thought of her father, — her beloved father; — a solitary wanderer on the face of the earth; or, most probably, thought she, his soul rests in death. Horrible idea If the latter, she envied his fate; if the former, she even supposed it preferable to her present abode. She again thought of Wolfstein; she pondered on his last words: — an escape from the cavern: oh delightful idea! Again her thoughts recurred to her father: tears bedewed her cheeks; she took a pencil, and, actuated by the feelings of the moment, inscribed on the wall of her prison these lines:

Ghosts of the dead! have I not heard your yelling
Rise on the night-rolling breath of the blast.
When o’er the dark ether the tempest is swelling.
And on eddying whirlwind the thunder-peal past?
For oft have I stood on the dark height of Jura.
Which frowns on the valley that opens beneath;
Oft have I brav’d the chill night-tempest’s fury.
Whilst around me, I thought, echo’d murmurs of death.
And now, whilst the winds of the mountain are howling.

O father! thy voice seems to strike on mine ear;
In air whilst the tide of the night-storm is rolling.
It breaks on the pause of the elements' jar.
On the wing of the whirlwind which roars o'er the mountain
Perhaps rides the ghost of my sire who is dead;
On the mist of the tempest which hangs o'er the fountain.

Whilst a wreath of dark vapour encircles his head. Here she paused, and, ashamed of the exuberance of her imagination, obliterated from the wall the characters which she had traced: the wind still howled dreadfully: in fearful anticipation of the morrow, she threw herself on the bed, and, in sleep, forgot the misfortunes which impended over her.

Meantime, the soul of Wolfstein was disturbed by ten thousand conflicting passions; revenge and disappointed love agonized his soul to madness; and he resolved to quench the rude feelings of his bosom in the blood of his rival. But, again he thought of Ginotti; he thought of the mysterious intervention which his dark glances proved not to be accidental. To him it was an inexplicable mystery; which the more he reflected upon, the less able was he to unravel. He had mixed the poison, unseen, as he thought, by any one; certainly unseen by Ginotti, whose back was unconcernedly turned at the time. He planned, therefore, a second attempt, unawed by what had happened before, for the destruction of Cavigni, which he resolved to put into execution this night.

Before he had become an associate with the band of robbers, the conscience of Wolfstein was clear; clear, at least, from the commission of any wilful and deliberate crime: for, alas! an event almost too dreadful for narration, had compelled him to quit his native country, in indigence and disgrace. His courage was equal to his wickedness; his mind was unalienable from its purpose; and whatever his will might determine, his boldness would fearlessly execute, even though hell and destruction were to yawn beneath his feet, and essay to turn his unappalled soul from the accomplishment of his design. Such was the guilty Wolfstein; a disgraceful fugitive from his country, a vile associate of a band of robbers, and a murderer, at least in intent, if not in deed. He shrunk not at the commission of crimes; he was now the hardened villain; eternal damnation, tortures inconceivable on earth, awaited him. "Foolish, degrading idea!" he exclaimed, as it momentarily glanced through his mind; "am I worthy of the celestial Megalena, if I shrink at the price which it is necessary I should pay

for her possession?” This idea banished every other feeling from his heart; and, smothering the stings of conscience, a decided resolve of murder took possession of him — the determining, within himself, to destroy the very man who had given him an asylum, when driven to madness by the horrors of neglect and poverty. He stood in the night-storm on the mountains; he cursed the intervention of Ginotti, and secretly swore that nor heaven nor hell again should dash the goblet of destruction from the mouth of the detested Cavigni. The soul of Wolfstein too, insatiable in its desires, and panting for liberty, ill could brook the confinement of idea, which the cavern of the bandits must necessarily induce. He longed again to try his fortune; he longed to re-enter that world which he had never tried but once, and that indeed for a short time; sufficiently long, however, to blast his blooming hopes, and to graft on the stock, which otherwise might have produeed virtue, the fatal seeds of vice.

CHAPTER. II.

The fiends of fate are heard to rave.

And the death-angel flaps his broad wing o’er the wave.

It was midnight; and all the robbers were assembled in the banquet-hall, amongst whom, bearing in his bosom a weight of premeditated crime, was Wolfstein; he sat by the chief. They discoursed on indifferent subjects; the sparkling goblet went round; loud laughter succeeded. The ruffians were rejoicing over some plunder which they had taken from a traveller, whom they had robbed of immense wealth; they had left his body a prey to the vultures of the mountains. The table groaned with the pressure of the feast. Hilarity reigned around: reiterated were the shouts of merriment and joy; if such could exist in a cavern of robbers.

It was long past midnight: another hour, and Megalena must be Cavigni’s. This idea rendered Wolfstein callous to every sting of conscience; and he eagerly awaited an opportunity when he might, unperceived, infuse poison into the goblet of one who confided in him. Ginotti sat opposite to Wolfstein: his arms were folded, and his gaze rested fixedly upon the fearless countenance of the murderer. Wolfstein shuddered when he beheld the brow of the mysterious Ginotti contracted, his marked features wrapped in inexplicable mystery.

All were now heated by wine, save the wily villain who destined murder; and the awe-inspiring Ginotti, whose reservedness and mystery, not even the hilarity of the present hour could dispel.

Conversation appearing to flag, Cavigni exclaimed, “Steindolph, you know some old German stories; cannot you tell one, to deceive the lagging hours?”

Steindolph was famed for his knowledge of metrical spectre tales, and the gang were frequently wont to hang delighted on the ghostly wonders which he related.

“Excuse, then, the mode of my telling it,” said Steindolph, “and I will with pleasure. I learnt it whilst in Germany; my old grandmother taught it me, and I can repeat it as a ballad.”—”Do, do,” re-echoed from every part of the cavern. — Steindolph thus began:

BALLAD.

I.

The death-bell beats! —
The mountain repeats
The echoing sound of the knell;
And the dark monk now
Wraps the cowl round his brow.
As he sits in his lonely cell.

II.

And the cold hand of death
Chills his shuddering breath.
As he lists to the fearful lay
Which the ghosts of the sky.
As they sweep wildly by.
Sing to departed day.
And they sing of the hour
When the stern fates had power
To resolve Rosa's form to its clay.

III.

But that hour is past;
And that hour was the last
Of peace to the dark monk's brain.
Bitter tears, from his eyes, gush'd silent and fast;
And he strove to suppress them in vain.

IV.

Then his fair cross of gold he dash'd on the floor.
When the death-knell struck on his ear. Delight is in store
For her evermore;
But for me is fate, horror, and fear.

V.

Then his eyes wildly roll'd.
When the death-bell toll'd.
And he rag'd in terrific woe.
And he stamp'd on the ground, —
But when ceas'd the sound.
Tears again began to flow.

VI.

And the ice of despair
Chill'd the wild throb of care.
And he sate in mute agony still;
Till the night-stars shone through the cloudless air.
And the pale moon-beam slept on the hill.

VII.

Then he knelt in his cell: —
And the horrors of hell
Were delights to his agoniz'd pain.
And he pray'd to God to dissolve the spell.
Which else must for ever remain.

VIII.

And in fervent pray'r he knelt on the ground.
Till the abbey bell struck One:
His feverish blood ran chill at the sound:
A voice hollow and horrible murmur'd around —
"The term of thy penance is done!"

IX.

Grew dark the night;

The moon-beam bright
Wax'd faint on the mountain high;
And, from the black hill.
Went a voice cold and still, —
"Monk! thou art free to die."

X.

Then he rose on his feet.
And his heart loud did beat.
And his limbs they were palsied with dread;
Whilst the grave's clammy dew
O'er his pale forehead grew;
And he shudder'd to sleep with the dead.

XI.

And the wild midnight storm
Rav'd around his tall form.
As he sought the chapel's gloom:
And the sunk grass did sigh
To the wind, bleak and high.
As he search'd for the new-made tomb.

XII.

And forms, dark and high.
Seem'd around him to fly.
And mingle their yells with the blast:
And on the dark wall
Half-seen shadows did fall.
As enhorror'd he onward pass'd.

XIII.

And the storm-fiend's wild rave
O'er the new-made grave.

And dread shadows, linger around.
The Monk call'd on God his soul to save.
And, in horror, sank on the ground.

XIV.

Then despair nerv'd his arm
To dispel the charm.
And he burst Rosa's coffin asunder.
And the fierce storm did swell
More terrific and fell.
And louder peal'd the thunder.

XV.

And laugh'd, in joy, the fiendish throng.
Mix'd with ghosts of the mouldering dead:
And their grisly wings, as they floated along.
Whistled in murmurs dread.

XVI.

And her skeleton form the dead Nun rear'd.
Which dripp'd with the chill dew of hell.
In her half-eaten eyeballs two pale flames appear'd.
And triumphant their gleam on the dark Monk glar'd.
As he stood within the cell.

XVII.

And her lank hand lay on his shuddering brain;
But each power was nerv'd by fear. —
"I never, henceforth, may breathe again;
Death now ends mine anguish'd pain. —
The grave yawns, — we meet there."

XVIII.

And her skeleton lungs did utter the sound.
So deadly, so lone, and so fell.
That in long vibrations shudder'd the ground;
And as the stern notes floated around.
A deep groan was answer'd from hell.

As Steindolph concluded, an universal shout of applause echoed through the cavern. Every one had been so attentive to the recitation of the robber, that no opportunity of perpetrating his resolve had appeared to Wolfstein. Now all again was revelry and riot, and the wily designer eagerly watched for the instant when universal confusion might favour his attempt to drop, unobserved, the powder into the goblet of the chief. With a gaze of insidious and malignant revenge was the eye of Wolfstein fixed upon the chieftain's countenance. Cavigni perceived it not; for he was heated with wine, or the unusual expression of his associate's face must have awakened suspicion, or excited remark. Yet was Ginotti's gaze fixed upon Wolfstein, who, like a sanguinary and remorseless ruffian, sat expectantly waiting the instant of death. The goblet passed round: — at the moment when Wolfstein mingled the poison with Cavigni's wine, the eyes of Ginotti, which before had regarded him with the most dazzling scrutiny, were intentionally turned away: he then arose from the table, and, complaining of sudden indisposition, retired. Cavigni raised the goblet to his lips —

"Now, my brave fellows," he exclaimed, "the hour is late; but before we retire, I here drink success and health to every one of you."

Wolfstein involuntarily shuddered. — Cavigni quaffed the liquor to the dregs! — the cup fell from his trembling hand. The chill dew of death sat upon his forehead: in terrific convulsion he fell headlong; and, inarticulately uttering "I am poisoned," sank seemingly lifeless on the earth. Sixty robbers at once rushed forward to raise him; and, reclining in their arms, with an horrible and harrowing shriek, the spark of life fled from his body for ever. A robber, skilled in surgery, opened a vein; but no blood followed the touch of the lancet. — Wolfstein advanced to the body, unappalled by the crime which he had committed, and tore aside the vest from its bosom: that bosom was discoloured by large spots of livid purple, which, by their premature appearance, declared the poison which had been used to destroy him, to be excessively powerful.

Every one regretted the death of the brave Cavigni; every one was surprised at the mode of his death: and, by his abruptly quitting the apartment, the suspicion fell upon Ginotti, who was consequently sent for by Ardolph, a robber whom they had chosen chieftain, Wolfstein having declined the proffered distinction.

Ginotti arrived. — His stern countenance was changed not by the execrations showered on him by every one. He yet remained unmoved, and apparently careless what sentiments others might entertain of him: he deigned not even to deny the charge. This coolness seemed to have convinced every one, the new chief in particular, of his innocence.

"Let every one," said Ardolph, "be searched; and if his pockets contain poison which could have effected this, let him die." This method was universally applauded. As soon as the acclamations were stilled, Wolfstein advanced forwards, and spoke thus:

"Any longer to conceal that it was I who perpetrated the deed, were useless. Megalena's loveliness inflamed me: — I envied one who was about to possess it. — I have murdered him!"

Here he was interrupted by the shouts of the bandits; and he was about to be delivered to death, when Ginotti advanced. His superior and towering figure inspired awe even in the hearts of the bandits. They were silent.

"Suffer Wolfstein," he exclaimed, "to depart unhurt. I will answer for his never publishing our retreat: I will promise that never more shall you behold him."

Every one submitted to Ginotti: for who could resist the superior Ginotti? From the gaze of Ginotti Wolfstein's soul shrank, enhorrored, in confessed inferiority: he who had shrunk not at death, had shrunk not to avow himself guilty of murder, and had prepared to meet its reward, started from Ginotti's eye-beam as from the emanation of some superior and preter-human being.

"Quit the cavern!" said Ginotti.—"May I not remain here until the morrow?" inquired Wolfstein.—"If tomorrow's rising sun finds you in this cavern," returned Ginotti, "I must deliver you up to the vengeance of those whom you have injured."

Wolfstein retired to his solitary cell, to retrace, in his mind, the occurrences of this eventful night. What was he now? — an isolated wicked wanderer; not a being on earth whom he could call a friend, and carrying with him that never-dying tormentor — conscience. In half-waking dreams

passed the night: the ghost of him whom he had so inhumanly destroyed, seemed to cry for justice at the throne of God; bleeding, pale, and ghastly, it pressed on his agonized brain; and confused, inexplicable visions flitted in his imagination, until the freshness of the morning breeze warned him to depart. He collected together all those valuables which had fallen to his share as plunder, during his stay in the cavern: they amounted to a large sum. He rushed from the cavern; he hesitated, — he knew not whither to fly. He walked fast, and essayed, by exercise, to smother the feelings of his soul; but the attempt was fruitless. Not far had he proceeded, ere, stretched on the earth apparently lifeless, he beheld a female form. He advanced towards it — it was Megalena!

A tumult of exulting and inconceivable transport rushed through his veins as he beheld her — her for whom he had plunged into the abyss of crime. She slept, and, apparently overcome by the fatigues which she had sustained, her slumber was profound. Her head reclined upon the jutting root of a tree: the tint of health and loveliness sat upon her cheek.

When the fair Megalena awakened, and found herself in the arms of Wolfstein, she started; yet, turning her eyes, she beheld it was no enemy, and the expression of terror gave way to pleasure. In the general confusion had Megalena escaped from the abode of the bandits. The destinies of Wolfstein and Megalena were assimilated by similarity of situations; and, before they quitted the spot, so far had this reciprocal feeling prevailed, that they swore mutual affection. Megalena then related her escape from the cavern, and showed Wolfstein jewels, to an immense amount, which she had secreted.

“At all events, then,” said Wolfstein, “we may defy poverty; for I have about me jewels to the value of ten thousand zechins.”

“We will go to Genoa,” said Megalena. “We will, my fair one. There, entirely devoted to each other, we will defy the darts of misery.”

Megalena returned no answer, save a look of else inexpressible love.

It was now the middle of the day; neither Wolfstein nor Megalena had tasted food since the preceding night; and faint, from fatigue, Megalena scarce could move onwards. “Courage, my love,” said Wolfstein; “yet a little way, and we shall arrive at a cottage, a sort of inn, where we may wait until the morrow, and hire mules to carry us to Placenza, whence we can easily proceed to the goal of our destination.”

Megalena collected her strength: in a short time they arrived at the cottage, and passed the remainder of the day in plans respecting the future. Wearied with unusual exertions, Megalena early retired to an inconvenient bed, which, however, was the best the cottage could afford; and Wolfstein, lying along the bench by the fireplace, resigned himself to meditation; for his mind was too much disturbed to let him sleep.

Although Wolfstein had every reason to rejoice at the success which had crowned his schemes; although the very event had occurred which his soul had so much and so eagerly panted for; yet, even now, in possession of all he held valuable on earth, was he ill at ease. Remorse for his crimes, tortured him: yet, steeling his conscience, he essayed to smother the fire which burned within his bosom; to change the tenour of his thoughts — in vain! he could not. Restless passed the night, and the middle of the day beheld Wolfstein and Megalena far from the habitation of the bandits.

They intended, if possible, to reach Breno that night, and thence, on the following day, to journey towards Genoa. They had descended the southern acclivity of the Alps. It was now hastening towards spring, and the whole country began to gleam with the renewed loveliness of nature. Odoriferous orange-groves scented the air. Myrtles bloomed on the sides of the gentle eminences which they occasionally ascended. The face of nature was smiling and gay; so was Megalena's heart: with exulting and speechless transport it bounded within her bosom. She gazed on him who possessed her soul; although she felt no inclination in her bosom to retrace the events, by means of which an obscure bandit, undefinable to herself, had gained the eternal love of the former haughty Megalena di Metastasio.

They soon arrived at Breno. Wolfstein dismissed the muleteer, and conducted Megalena into the interior of the inn, ordering at the same time a supper. Again were repeated protestations of eternal affection, avowals of indissoluble love; but it is sufficient to conceive what cannot be so well described.

It was near midnight; Wolfstein and Megalena sat at supper, and conversed with that unrestrainedness and gaiety which mutual confidence inspired, when the door was opened, and the innkeeper announced the arrival of a man who wished to speak with Wolfstein.

"Tell him," exclaimed Wolfstein, rather surprised, and wishing to guard against the possibility of danger, "that I will not see him."

The landlord left the room, and, in a short time, returned. A man accompanied him: he was of gigantic stature, and masked. “He would take no denial, Signor,” said the landlord, in exculpation, as he left the room.

The stranger advanced to the table at which Wolfstein and Megalena sat: he threw aside his mask, and disclosed the features of — Ginotti! Wolfstein’s frame became convulsed with involuntary horror: he started. Megalena was surprised.

Ginotti, at length, broke the terrible silence.

“Wolfstein,” he said, “I saved you from, otherwise, inevitable death; by my means alone have you gained Megalena: — what do I then deserve in return?” Wolfstein looked on the countenance: it was stern and severe, yet divested of the terrible expression which had before caused his frame to shudder with excess of alarm.

“My eternal gratitude,” returned Wolfstein, hesitatingly.

“Will you promise, that when, destitute and a wanderer, I demand your protection, when I beseech you to listen to the tale which I shall relate, you will listen to me; that, when I am dead, you will bury me, and suffer my soul to rest in the endless slumber of annihilation? Then will you repay me for the benefits which I have conferred upon you.”

“I will,” replied Wolfstein, “I will perform all that you require.”

“Swear it!” exclaimed Ginotti.

“I swear.”

Ginotti then abruptly quitted the apartment; the sound of his footsteps was heard descending the stairs; and, when they were no longer audible, a weight seemed to have been taken from the breast of Wolfstein.

“How did that man save your life?” inquired Megalena.

“He was one of our band,” replied Wolfstein, evasively, “and, on a plundering excursion, his pistol-ball entered the heart of the man, whose sabre, lifted aloft, would else have severed my head from my body.”

“Dear Wolfstein, who are you? — whence came you? — for you were not always an Alpine bandit?”

“That is true, my adored one; but fate presents an insuperable barrier to my ever relating the events which occurred previously to my connexion with the banditti. Dearest Megalena, if you love me, never question me concerning my past life, but rest satisfied with the conviction, that my future existence shall be devoted to you, and to you alone.” Megalena felt

surprise; but although eagerly desiring to unravel the mystery in which Wolfstein shrouded himself, desisted from inquiry.

Ginotti's mysterious visit had made too serious an impression on the mind of Wolfstein to be lightly erased. In vain he essayed to appear easy and unembarrassed while he conversed with Megalena. He attempted to drown thought in wine — but in vain: — Ginotti's strange injunction pressed, like a load of ice, upon his breast. At last, the hour being late, they both retired to their respective rooms.

Early on the following morning, Wolfstein arose, to arrange the necessary preparations for their journey to Genoa; whither he had sent a servant whom he hired at Breno, to prepare accommodations for their arrival. — Needless were it minutely to describe each trivial event which occurred during their journey to Genoa.

On the morning of the fourth day, they found themselves within a short distance of the city. They determined on the plan which they should adopt, and, in a short space of time, arriving at Genoa, took up their residence in a mansion on the outermost extremity of the city.

CHAPTER. III.

Whence, and what art thou, execrable shape.
That dar'st, though grim and terrible, advance
Thy miscreated front athwart my way?
Paradise Lost.

Time passed; and, settled in their new habitation, Megalena and Wolfstein appeared to defy the arrows of vengeful destiny.

Wolfstein resolved to allow some time to elapse before he spoke of the subject nearest to his heart, of herself, to Megalena. One evening, however, overcome by the passion which, by mutual indulgence, had become resistless, he cast himself at her feet, and, avowing most unbounded love, demanded the promised return. A slight spark of virtue yet burned in the bosom of the wretched girl; she essayed to fly from temptation; but Wolfstein, seizing her hand, said, "And is my adored Megalena a victim then to prejudice? Does she believe, that the Being who created us gave us passions which never were to be satiated? Does she suppose that Nature created us to become the tormentors of each other?"

"Ah! Wolfstein," Megalena said tenderly, "rise! — You know too well the chain which unites me to you is indissoluble; you know that I must be thine; where, therefore, is there an appeal?"

"To thine own heart, Megalena; for, if my image implanted there is not sufficiently eloquent to confirm your hesitating soul, I would wish not for a casket that contains a jewel unworthy of my possession."

Megalena involuntarily started at the strength of his expression; she felt how completely she was his, and turned her eyes upon his countenance, to read in it the meaning of his words. — His eyes gleamed with excessive and confiding love.

"Yes." exclaimed Megalena, "yes, prejudice avaunt! once more reason takes her seat, and convinces me, that to be Wolfstein's is not criminal. O Wolfstein! if for a moment Megalena has yielded to the imbecility of nature, believe that she yet knows how to recover herself, to reappear in her proper character. Ere I knew you, a void in my heart, and a tasteless carelessness of those objects which now interest me, confessed your unseen empire; my heart longed for something which now it has attained. I scruple not,

Wolfstein, to aver that it is you: — Be mine, then, and let our affection end not but with our existence!"

"Never, never shall it end!" enthusiastically exclaimed Wolfstein.

"Never! — What can break the bond joined by congeniality of sentiment, cemented by an union of soul which must endure till the intellectual particles which compose it become annihilated? Oh! never shall it end; for when, convulsed by nature's latest ruin, sinks the fabric of this perishable globe; when the earth is dissolved away, and the face of heaven is rolled from before our eyes like a scroll; then will we seek each other, and, in eternal, indivisible, although immaterial union, shall we exist to all eternity."

Yet the love, with which Wolfstein regarded Megalena, notwithstanding the strength of his expressions, though fervent and excessive, at first, was not of that nature which was likely to remain throughout existence; it was like the blaze of the meteor at midnight, which glares amid the darkness for awhile, and then expires; yet did he love her now; at least if heated admiration of her person and accomplishments, independently of mind, be love.

Blessed in mutual affection, if so it may be called, the time passed swift to Wolfstein and Megalena. No incident worthy of narration occurred to disturb the uninterrupted tenour of their existence. Tired, at last, even with delight, which had become monotonous from long continuance, they began to frequent the public places. It was one evening, nearly a month subsequent to their first residence at Genoa, that they went to a party at the Duca di Thice. It was there that he beheld the gaze of one of the crowd fixed upon him. Indefinable to himself were the emotions which shook him; in vain he turned to every part of the saloon to evade the scrutiny of the stranger's gaze; he was not able to give formation, in his own mind, to the ideas which struck him; they were acknowledged, however, in his heart, by sensations awful, and not to be described. He knew that he had before seen the features of the stranger; but he had forgotten Ginotti; for it was Ginotti — from whose scrutinizing glance, Wolfstein turned appalled; — it was Ginotti, of whose strangely and fearfully gleaming eyeball Wolfstein endeavoured to evade the fascination in vain. His eyes, resistlessly attracted to the sphere of chill horror that played around Ginotti's glance, in vain were fixed on vacuity; in vain attempted to notice other objects. Complaining to Megalena of sudden and violent indisposition, Wolfstein with her retired, and they

quickly reached the steps of their mansion. Arrived there, Megalena tenderly inquired the cause of Wolfstein's illness, but his vague answers, and unconnected exclamations, soon led her to suppose it was not corporeal. She entreated him to acquaint her with the reason of his indisposition; Wolfstein, however, wishing to conceal from Megalena the true cause of his emotions, evasively told her that he had felt excessively faint from the heat of the assembly; she well knew, by his manner, that he had not told her truth, but affected to be satisfied, resolving, at some future period, to develope the mystery with which he evidently was environed. Retired to rest, Wolfstein's mind, torn by contending paroxysms of passion, admitted not of sleep; he ruminated on the mysterious reappearance of Ginotti; and the more he reflected, the more did the result of his reflections lead him astray. The strange gaze of Ginotti, and the consciousness that he was completely in the power of so indefinable a being; the consciousness that, wheresoever he might go, Ginotti would still follow him, pressed upon Wolfstein's heart. Ignorant of what connexion they could have with this mysterious observer of his actions, his crimes recurred in hideous and disgustful array to the bewildered mind of Wolfstein; he reflected, that, although now exulting in youthful health and vigour, the time would come, the dreadful day of retribution, when endless damnation would yawn beneath his feet, and he would shrink from eternal punishment before the tribunal of that God whom he had insulted. To evade death, unconscious why, became an idea on which he dwelt with earnestness; he thought on it for a time, and being mournfully convinced of its impossibility, strove to change the tenour of his reflections.

While these thoughts dwelt in his mind, sleep crept imperceptibly over his senses; yet, in his visions, was Ginotti present. He dreamed that he stood on the brink of a frightful precipice, at whose base, with deafening and terrific roar, the waves of the ocean dashed; that, above his head, the blue glare of the lightning dispelled the obscurity of midnight, and the loud crashing of the thunder was rolled franticly from rock to rock; that, along the cliff on which he stood, a figure, more frightful than the imagination of man is capable of portraying, advanced towards him, and was about to precipitate him headlong from the summit of the rock whereon he stood, when Ginotti advanced, and rescued him from the grasp of the monster; that no sooner had he done this, than the figure dashed Ginotti from the precipice — his last groans were borne on the blast which swept the bosom

of the ocean. Confused visions then obliterated the impressions of the former, and he rose in the morning restless and unrefreshed.

A weight which his utmost efforts could not remove, pressed upon the bosom of Wolfstein; his mind, superior and towering as it was, found all its energies inefficient to conquer it. As a last resource, therefore, this wretched victim of vice and folly sought the gaming-table; a scene which alone could raise the spirits of one who required something important, even in his pastimes, to interest him. He staked large sums; and, although he concealed his haunts from Megalena, she soon discovered them. For a time, fortune smiled; till one evening he entered his mansion, desperate from ill luck, and, accusing his own hapless destiny, could no longer conceal the truth from Megalena. She reproved him mildly, and her tenderness had such an effect on Wolfstein that he burst into tears, and promised her that never again would he yield to the vicious influence of folly.

The rapid days rolled on, and each one brought the conviction to Wolfstein more strongly, that Megalena was not the celestial model of perfection which his warm imagination had portrayed; he began to find in her, not the exhaustless mine of interesting converse which he had once supposed. Possession, which, when unassisted by real, intellectual love, clogs man, increases the ardent, uncontrollable passions of woman even to madness. Megalena yet adored Wolfstein with most fervent love: — although yet greatly attached to Megalena, although he would have been uneasy were she another's, Wolfstein no longer regarded her with that idolatrous affection which had filled his bosom towards her. Feelings of this nature, naturally drove Wolfstein occasionally from home to seek for employment — and what employment, save gaming, could Genoa afford to Wolfstein? — In what other occupation was it possible that he could engage? It was done: he broke his promise to Megalena, and became even a more devoted votary to gambling than before.

How powerful are the attractions of delusive vice! Wolfstein soon staked large sums — larger even than ever. With what anxiety did he watch the dice! — How were his eyeballs strained with mingled anticipation of wealth and poverty! Now fortune smiled; yet he concealed even his good luck from Megalena. At length the tide changed again: he lost immense sums; and, desperate from a series of ill success, cursed his hapless destiny, and with wildest emotions rushed into the street. Again he solemnly swore to

Megalena, that never more would he risk their mutual happiness by his folly.

Still, hurried away by the impulse of a burning desire of interesting his deadened feelings, did Wolfstein, false to his promise, seek the gaming-table; he had staked an enormous amount, and the fatal throw was at this instant about to decide the fate of the unhappy Wolfstein.

A pause, as if some dreadful event were about to occur, ensued; each gazed upon the countenance of Wolfstein, which, desperate from danger, retained, however, an expressive firmness.

A stranger stood before Wolfstein on the opposite side of the table. He appeared to have no interest in what was going forward, but, with immoved gaze, fixed his eyes upon his countenance.

Wolfstein felt an instinctive shuddering thrill through his frame, when, oh horrible confirmation of his wildest apprehensions! it was — Ginotti! — the terrible, the mysterious Ginotti, whose dire scrutiny, resting upon Wolfstein, chilled his soul with excessive affright.

A sensation of extreme and conflicting emotions shook the inmost recesses of Wolfstein's heart; for an instant his brain swam around in wildest commotion, yet he steeled his resolution, even to the horrors of hell and destruction; he gazed on the mysterious scrutineer who stood before him, and, regardless of the sum he had staked, and which before had engaged his whole attention, and excited his liveliest interest, dashed the box convulsively upon the table, and followed Ginotti, who was about to quit the apartment, resolving to clear up a fatality which hung around him, and appeared to blast his prospects; for of the misfortunes which had succeeded his association with the bandits, he had not the slightest doubt, in his own mind, that Ginotti was the cause.

With reflections a scene of the wildest anarchy, Wolfstein resolved to unravel the mystery in which he saw Ginotti was shrouded; and resolved, therefore, to devote that night towards finding out his abode. With feelings such as these, he rushed into the street, and followed the gigantic form of Ginotti, who stalked onwards majestically, as if conscious of safety, and wholly ignorant of the eager scrutiny with which Wolfstein watched his every movement.

It was midnight — yet they continued to advance; a feeling of desperation urged Wolfstein onwards; he resolved to follow Ginotti, even to the extremity of the universe. They passed through many bye and narrow

streets; the darkness was complete; but the rays of the lamps, as they fell upon the lofty form of Ginotti, guided the footsteps of Wolfstein.

They had reached the end of the Strada Nuova; the lengthened sound of Ginotti's footsteps was all that struck upon Wolfstein's ear. On a sudden, Ginotti's figure disappeared from Wolfstein's gaze; in vain he looked around him, in vain he searched every recess, wherein he might have secreted himself — Ginotti was gone!

To describe the surprise mingled with awe, which possessed Wolfstein's bosom, is impossible. In vain he searched every part. He proceeded to the bridge; a party of fishermen were waiting there; he inquired of them, had they seen a man of superior stature pass? they appeared surprised at his question, and unanimously answered in the negative. While varying emotions tumultuously contended within his bosom, Wolfstein, ever the victim of extraordinary events, paused awhile, revolving the mystery both of Ginotti's appearance and disappearance. That business of an important nature led him to Genoa, he doubted not; his indifference at the gaming-table, his particular regard of Wolfstein, left, in the mind of the latter, no doubt, but that he took a terrible and mysterious interest in whatever related to him.

All now was silent. The inhabitants of Genoa lay wrapped in sleep, and, save the occasional conversation of the fishermen who had just returned, no sound broke on the uninterrupted stillness, and thick clouds obscured the starbeams of heaven.

Again Wolfstein searched that part of the city which lay near Strada Nuova; but no one had seen Ginotti; although all wondered at the wild expressions and disordered mien of Wolfstein. The bell tolled the hour of three ere Wolfstein relinquished his pursuit; finding, however, further inquiry fruitless, he engaged a chair to take him to his habitation, where he doubted not that Megalena anxiously awaited his return.

Proceeding along the streets, the obscurity of the night was not so great but that he observed the figure of one of the chairmen to be above that of common men, and that he had drawn his hat forwards to conceal his countenance. His appearance, however, excited no remark; for Wolfstein was too much absorbed in the idea which related individually to himself, to notice what, perhaps, at another time, might have excited wonder. The wind sighed moaningly along the stilly colonnades, and the grey light of morning began to appear above the eastern eminences.

They entered the street which soon led to the abode of Wolfstein, who fixed his eyes upon the chairman. His gigantic proportions struck him with involuntary awe: such is the unaccountable connexion of idea in the mind of man. He shuddered. Such a man, thought he, is Ginotti: such a man is he who watches my every action, whose power I feel within myself is resistless, and not to be evaded. He sighed deeply when he reflected on the terrible connexion, dreadful although mysterious, which subsisted between himself and Ginotti. His soul sank within him at the idea of his own littleness, when a fellowmortal might be able to gain so strong, though sightless, an empire over him. He felt that he was no longer independent. Whilst these thoughts agitated his mind, the chair had stopped at his habitation. He turned round to discharge the chairman's fare, when, casting his eyes on his countenance, which hitherto had remained concealed, oh horrible and chilling conviction! he recognised in his dark features those of the terrific Ginotti. As if hell had yawned at the feet of the hapless Wolfstein, as if some spectre of the night had blasted his straining eyeball, so did he stand transfixed. His soul shrank with mingled awe and abhorrence from a being who, even to himself, was confessedly superior to the proud and haughty Wolfstein. Ere well he could calm his faculties, agitated by so unexpected an interview, Ginotti said.

"Wolfstein! long have I known you; long have I marked you as the only man who now exists, worthy, and appreciating the value of what I have in store for you. Inscrutable are my intentions; seek not, therefore, to develope them: time will do it in a far more complete manner. You shall not now know the motive for my, to you, unaccountable actions: strive not, therefore, to unravel them. You may frequently see me: never attempt to speak or follow; for, if you do—" Here the eyes of Ginotti flashed with coruscations of inexpressible fire, and his every feature became animated by the tortures which he was about to describe; but he suddenly checked himself, and only added, "Attend to these my directions, but try, if possible, to forget me. I am not what I seem. The time may come, will most probably arrive, when I shall appear in my real character to you. You, Wolfstein, have I singled out from the whole world to make the depositary—" He ceased, and abruptly quitted the spot.

CHAPTER. IV.

— Nature shrinks back.
Enhorror'd from the lurid gaze of vengeance.
E'en in the deepest caverns, and the voice
Of all her works lies hush'd.
— Olympia.

On Wolfstein's return to his habitation, he found Megalena in anxious expectation of his arrival. She feared that some misfortune had befallen him. Wolfstein related to her the events of the preceding night; they appeared to her mysterious and inexplicable; nor could she offer any consolation to the wretched Wolfstein.

The occurrences of the preceding evening left a load upon his breast, which all the gaieties of Genoa were insufficient to dispel: eagerly he longed for the visit of Ginotti. Slow dragged the hours: each day did he expect it, and each succeeding day brought but disappointment to his expectations.

Megalena too, the beautiful, the adored Megalena, was no longer what formerly she was, the innocent girl hanging on his support, and depending wholly upon him for defence and protection; no longer, with mild and love-beaming eyes, she regarded the haughty Wolfstein as a superior being, whose look or slightest word was sufficient to decide her on any disputed point. No; dissipated pleasures had changed the former mild and innocent Megalena. Far, far different was she than when she threw herself into his arms on their escape from the cavern, and, with a blush, smiled upon the first declaration of Wolfstein's affection.

Now immersed in a succession of gay pleasures, Megalena was no longer the gentle interesting she, whose soul of sensibility would tremble if a worm beneath her feet expired; whose heart would sink within her at the tale of others' woe. She had become a fashionable belle, and forgot, in her new character, the fascinations of her old one. Still, however, was she ardently, solely, and resistlessly attached to Wolfstein: his image was implanted in her soul, never to be effaced by casualty, never erased by time. No coolness apparently took place between them; but, although unperceived and unacknowledged by each, an indifference evidently did exist between them. Among the various families whom their residence in Genoa had

rendered familiar to Wolfstein and Megalena, none were more so than that of il Conte della Anzasca; it consisted of himself, la Contessa, and a daughter of exquisite loveliness, named Olympia.

This girl, mistress of every fascinating accomplishment, uniting in herself to great brilliancy and playfulness of wit, a person alluring beyond description, was in her eighteenth year. From habitual indulgence, her passions, naturally violent and excessive, had become irresistible; and when once she had fixed a determination in her mind, that determination must either be effected, or she must cease to exist. Such, then, was the beautiful Olympia, and as such she conceived a violent and unconquerable passion for Wolfstein. His towering and majestic form, his expressive and regular features, beaming with somewhat of softness; yet pregnant with a look as if woe had beat to the earth a mind whose native and unconfined energies aspired to heaven — all, all told her, that, without him, she must either cease to be, or drag on a life of endless and irremediable woe. Nourished by restless imagination, her passion soon attained a most unbridled height: instead of conquering a feeling which honour, generosity, virtue, all forbade ever to be gratified, she gloried within herself at having found one on whom she might with justice fix her burning attachment; for although the object of them had never before been present to her mind, the desires for that object, although unseen, had taken root long, long ago. A false system of education, and a wrong expansion of ideas, as they became formed, had been put in practice with respect to her youthful mind; and indulgence strengthened the passions which it behoved restraint to keep within proper bounds, and which might have unfolded themselves as coadjutors of virtue, and not as promoters of vicious and illicit love. Fiercer, nevertheless, in proportion as greater obstacles appeared in the prosecution of her resolve, flamed the passion of the devoted Olympia. Her brain was whirled round in the fiercest convulsions of expectant happiness; the anticipation of gratified voluptuousness swelled her bosom even to bursting, yet did she rein-in the boiling emotions of her soul, and resolved to be sufficiently cool, more certainly to accomplish her purpose.

It was one night when Wolfstein's mansion was the scene of gaiety, that this idea first suggested itself to the mind of Olympia, and unfolded itself to her, as it really was love for Wolfstein. In vain the suggestions of generosity, the voice of conscience, which told her how doubly wicked would be the attempt of alienating from her the lover of her friend

Megalena, in audible, though noiseless, accents spoke; in vain the native modesty of her sex represented in its real and hideous colours what she was about to do: still Olympia was resolved.

That night, in the solitude of her own chamber, in the palazzo of her father, she retraced in her mind the various events which had led to her present uncontrollable passion, which had employed her whole thoughts, and rendered her, as it were, dead to every other outward existence. The wild transports of maddening desire raved terrific within her breast: she endeavoured to smother the ideas which presented themselves; but the more she strove to erase them from her mind, the more vividly were they represented in her heated and enthusiastic imagination. “And will he not return my love?” she exclaimed: “will he not? — ah! a bravo’s dagger shall pierce his heart, and thus will I reward him for his contempt of Olympia della Anzasca. But no! it is impossible. I will cast myself at his feet; I will avow to him the passion which consumes me, — will swear to be ever, ever his! Can he then cast me from him? Can he despise a woman whose only fault is love, nay, idolatry, adoration for him?”

She paused. — The tumultuous passions of her soul were now too fierce for utterance — too fierce for concealment or restraint. The hour was late; the moon poured its mildlylustrous beams upon the lengthened colonnades of Genoa, when Olympia, overcome by emotions such as these, quitted her father’s palazzo, and hastened, with rapid and unequal footsteps, towards the mansion of Wolfstein. The streets were by no means crowded; but those who yet lingered in them gazed with slight surprise on the figure of Olympia, which, light and symmetrical as a celestial sylphid, passed swiftly onwards.

She soon arrived at the habitation of Wolfstein, and sent the domestic to announce that one wished to speak with him, whose business was pressing and secret. She was conducted into an apartment, and there awaited the arrival of Wolfstein. A confused expression of awe played upon his features as he entered; but it suddenly gave place to that of surprise. He started upon perceiving Olympia, and said.

“To what, Lady Olympia, do I owe the unforeseen pleasure of your visit? What so mysterious business have you with me?” continued he playfully.

“But come, we had just sat down to supper; Megalena is within.”—”Oh! if you wish to see me expire in horrible torments at your feet, inhuman Wolfstein, call for Megalena! and then will your purpose be

accomplished.”—”Dearest Lady Olympia, compose yourself, I beseech you,” said Wolfstein: “what, what agitates you?”—”Oh! pardon, pardon me,” she exclaimed, with maniac wildness: “pardon a wretched female who knows not what she does! Oh! resistlessly am I impelled to this avowal; resistlessly am I impelled to declare to you, that I love you! adore you to distraction! — Will you return my affection? But, ah! I rave! Megalena, the beloved Megalena, claims you as her own; and the wretched Olympia must moan the blighted prospects which were about to open fair before her eyes.”

“For Heaven’s sake, dear lady, compose yourself; recollect who you are; recollect the loftiness of birth and loveliness of form which are so eminently yours. This, this is far beneath Olympia.”

“Oh!” she exclaimed, franticly casting herself at his feet, and bursting into a passion of tears, “what are birth, fame, fortune, and all the advantages which are casually given to me! I swear to thee, Wolfstein, that I would sacrifice not only these, but even all my hopes of future salvation, even the forgiveness of my Creator, were it required from me. O Wolfstein, kind, pitying Wolfstein, look down with an eye of indulgence on a female whose only crime is resistless, unquenchable adoration of you.”

She panted for breath, her pulses beat with violence, her eyes swam, and, overcome by the conflicting passions of her soul, the frame of Olympia fell, sickening with faintness, on the ground. Wolfstein raised her, and tenderly essayed to recall the senses of the hapless girl. Recovering, and perceiving her situation, Olympia started, seemingly horrified, from the arms of Wolfstein. The energies of her high mind instantly resumed their functions, and she exclaimed, “Then, base and ungrateful Wolfstein, you refuse to unite your fate with mine? My love is ardent and excessive, but the revenge which may follow the despiser of it is far more impetuous; reflect well then ere you drive Olympia della Anzasca to despair.”—”No reflection, in the present instance, is needed, Lady,” replied Wolfstein, coolly, yet determinedly. “What man of honour needs a moment’s rumination to discover what nature has so inerasibly implanted in his bosom — the sense of right and wrong? I am connected with a female whom I love, who confides in me; in what manner should I merit her confidence, if I join myself to another? Nor can the loveliness, the exquisite, the unequalled loveliness of the beautiful Olympia della Anzasca compensate me for breaking an oath sworn to another.”

He paused. — Olympia spake not, but appeared to be awaiting the dreadful fiat of her destiny.

"Olympia," Wolfstein continued, "pardon me! Were I not irrevocably Megalena's, I must be thine: I esteem you, I admire you, but my love is another's."

The passion which before had choked Olympia's utterance, appeared to give way to the impetuousness of her emotions.

"Then," she said, as a solemnity of despair toned her voice to firmness, "then you are irrevocably another's?"

"I am compelled to be explicit; I am compelled to say, I am another's for ever!" fervently returned Wolfstein.

Again fainting from the excess of painful feeling which vibrated through her frame, Olympia fell at Wolfstein's feet: again he raised her, and, in anxious solicitude, watched her varying countenance. At the critical instant when Olympia had just recovered from the faintness which had oppressed her, the door burst open, and disclosed to the view of the passion-grieving Olympia, the detested form of Megalena. A silence, resembling that when a solemn pause in the midnight-tempest announces that the elements only hesitate to collect more terrific force for the ensuing explosion, took place, while Megalena surveyed Olympia and Wolfstein. Still she spoke not; yet the silence, even more terrible than the commotion which followed, continued to prevail. Olympia dashed by Megalena, and faintly articulating "Vengeance!" rushed into the street, and bent her rapid flight to the Palazzo di Anzasca.

"Wolfstein," said Megalena, her voice quivering with excessive emotion, "Wolfstein, how have I deserved this? How have I deserved a dereliction so barbarous and so unprovoked? But no!" she added in a firmer tone; "no! I will leave you! I will show that I can bear the tortures of disappointed love, better than you can evade the scrunity of one who did adore thee."

In vain Wolfstein put in practice every soothing art of tranquillize the agitation of Megalena. Her frame trembled with violent shuddering; yet her soul, as it were, superior to the form which enshrined it, loftily towered, and retained its firmness amidst the frightful chaos which battled within.

"Now," said she to Wolfstein, "I will leave you!"

"O God! Megalena, dearest, adored Megalena!" exclaimed Wolfstein, passionately, "stop — I love you, must ever love you: deign, at least, to hear me."—"What good would accrue from that?" gloomily inquired Megalena.

Wolfstein rushed towards her; he threw himself at her feet, and exclaimed, “If ever, for one instant, my soul was alienated from thee — if ever it swerved from the affection which I have sworn to thee — may the red right hand of God instantaneously dash me beneath the lowest abyss of hell! O Megalena! is it as a victim of groundless jealousy that I have immolated myself at the altar of thy perfections? Have I only raised myself to this summit of happiness to feel more deeply the fall of which thou art the cause? O Megalena! if yet one spark of thy former love lingers in thy breast, oh! believe one who swears that he must be thine even till the particles which compose the soul devoted to thee, become annihilated.” — He paused.

Megalena heard his wildly enthusiastic expressions in sullen silence. She looked upon him with a stern and severe gaze: — he yet lay at her feet, and, hiding his face upon the earth, groaned deeply. “What proof,” exclaimed Magalena, impatiently, “what proof will Wolfstein, the deceiver, bring to satisfy me that his love is still mine?”

“Seek for proof in my heart,” returned Wolfstein; “that heart which yet is bleeding from the thorns which thou, cruel girl, hast implanted in it: seek it in my every action, and then will the convinced Megalena know that Wolfstein is hers irrevocably — body and soul, for ever!”

“Yet, I believe thee not!” said Mega lena; “for the haughty Olympia della Anzasca would scarcely recline in the arms of a man who was not entirely devoted to her.”

Yet were the charms of Megalena unfaded; yet their empire over Wolfstein excessive and complete.

“Still I believe thee not,” continued she, as a smile of expectant malice sat upon her cheek. “I require some proof which will assuredly convince me, that I am yet beloved: give me proof, and Megalena will again be Wolfstein’s.”—”Oh!” said Wolfstein, mournfully, “what farther proof can I give, but my oath, that never in soul or body have I broken the allegiance that I formerly swore to thee?”

“The death of Olympia!” gloomily returned Megalena.

“What mean you?” said Wolfstein, starting.

“I mean,” continued Megalena, collectedly, as if what she was about to utter had been the result of serious cogitation; “I mean that, if ever you wish again to possess my affections, ere to-morrow morning, Olympia must expire!”

“Murder the innocent Olympia?”

“Yes!”

A pause ensued; during which the mind of Wolfstein, torn by ten thousand warring emotions, knew not on what to resolve. He gazed upon Megalena; her symmetrical form shone with tenfold loveliness to his enraptured imagination: again he resolved to behold those eyes beam with affection for him, which were now gloomily fixed upon the ground. “Will nothing else convince Megalena that Wolfstein is eternally hers?”

“Nothing.”

“‘T is done then,” exclaimed Wolfstein, “‘t is done. Yet,” he muttered, “I may suffer for this premeditated act tortures now inconceivable; I may writhe, convulsed, in immaterial agony for ever and for ever — ah! I cannot. No!” he continued; “Megalena, I am again yours; I will immolate the victim which thou requirest as a sacrifice to our love. Give me a dagger, which may sweep off from the face of the earth, one who is hateful to thee! Adored creature, give me the dagger, and I will restore it to thee dripping with Olympia’s hated blood; it shall have first been buried in her heart.”

“Then, then again art thou mine own! again art thou the idolized Wolfstein, whom I was wont to love!” said Megalena, enfolding him in her embrace. Perceiving her returning softness, Wolfstein essayed to induce her to spare him the frightful proof of the ardour of his attachment; but she started from his arms as he spoke, and exclaimed.

“Ah! base deceiver, do you hesitate?”

“Oh, no! I do not hesitate, dearest Megalena; — give me a dagger, and I go.”

“Here, follow me then,” returned Megalena. He followed her to the supper-room.

“It is useless to go yet, it has but yet struck one; the inhabitants of il Palazzo della Anzasca will, about two, be nearly all retired to rest; till then, let us converse on what we were about to do.” So far did Megalena’s seductive blandishment, her artful selection of converse, win upon Wolfstein, that, when the destined hour approached, his sanguinary soul thirsted for the blood of the comparatively innocent Olympia.

“Well!” he cried, swallowing down an overflowing goblet of wine, “now the time is come; now suffer me to go, and tear the soul of Olympia from her hated body.” His fury amounted almost to delirium, as, masked, and having a dagger, which Megalena had given him, concealed beneath his

garments, he proceeded rapidly along the streets towards the Palazzo della Anzasca. So eager was he to shed the lifeblood of Olympia, that he flew, rather than ran, along the silent streets of Genoa. The colonnades of the lofty Palazzo della Anzasca resounded to his rapid footsteps; he stopped at its lofty portal: — it was open; unperceived he entered, and, hiding himself behind a column, according to the directions of Megalena, waited there. Soon advancing through the hall, he saw the sylphlike figure of the lovely Olympia; with silent tread he followed it, experiencing not the slightest sentiment of remorse within his bosom for the deed which he was about to perpetrate. He followed her to her apartment, and secreting himself until Olympia might have sunk into sleep, with sanguinary and remorseless patience, when her loud breathing convinced him that her slumber was profound, he arose from his place of concealment, and advanced to the bed, wherein Olympia lay. Her light tresses, disengaged from the band which had confined them, floated around a countenance, superhumanly beautiful, and whose expression, even in slumber, appeared to be tinted by Wolfstein's refusal; convulsive sighs heaved her fair bosom, and tears, starting from under her eyelids, fell profusely down her damask cheek. Wolfstein gazed upon her in silence. "Cruel, inhuman Megalena!" he mentally soliloquized; "could nothing but immolation of this innocence appease thee?" Again he stifled the stings of rebelling conscience; again the unquenchable and resistless ardour of his love for Megalena stimulated him to the wildest pitch of fury: he raised high the dagger, and, drawing aside the covering which veiled her alabaster bosom, paused an instant, to decide in which place it were most instantaneously destructive to strike. Again a mournful smile irradiated her lovely features; it played with a sweet softness on her countenance: it seemed as though she smiled in defiance of the arrows of destiny, but that her soul, nevertheless, lingered with the wretch who sought her life. Maddened by the sight of so much beauteous innocence, even the desperate Wolfstein, forgetful of the danger which he must thereby incur, hurled the dagger from him. The sound awakened Olympia: she started up in surprise; but her alarm was changed into ecstacy when she beheld the idolized possessor of her soul standing before her.

"I was dreaming of you," said Olympia, scarcely knowing whether this were not a dream; but, impulsively following the first emotions of her soul, "I dreamed that you were about to murder me. It is not so, Wolfstein, no! you would not murder one who adores you?"

“Murder Olympia! O God! no! — I take Heaven to witness, that I never now could do it!”

“Nor could you ever, I hope, dear Wolfstein; but drive away thoughts like these, and remember that Olympia lives but for thee; and the moment which takes from her your affections, seals the death-like fiat of her destiny.” These asseverations, strengthened by the most solemn and deadly vows that he would return to Megalena the destroyer of Olympia, flashed across Wolfstein’s mind. Perpetrate the deed, now, he could not; his soul became a scene of most terrific agony. “Wilt thou be mine?” exclaimed the enraptured Olympia, as a ray of hope arose in her mind. “Never! never can I,” groaned the agitated Wolfstein; “I am irrevocably, indissolubly another’s.” Maddened by this death-blow to all expectations of happiness, which the deluded Olympia had so fondly anticipated, she leaped wildly from the bed. A light and flowing night-dress alone veiled her form: her alabaster bosom was shaded by the light ringlets of her hair which rested unconfined upon it. She threw herself at the feet of Wolfstein. On a sudden, as if struck by some thought, she started convulsively from the earth: for an instant she paused.

The rays of a lamp, which stood in a recess of the apartment, fell full upon the dagger of Wolfstein. Eagerly Olympia sprung towards it; and, ere Wolfstein was aware of her dreadful intent, plunged it into her bosom. Weltering in purple gore she fell: no groan, no sigh escaped her lips. A smile, which the pangs of dissolution could not dispel, played on her convulsed countenance; it irradiated her features with celestially awful, although terrific expression. “Ineffectually have I endeavoured to conquer the ardent feelings of my soul; now I overcome them,” were her last words. She utterred them in a tone of firmness, and, falling back, expired in torments, which her fine, her expressive features declared that she gloried in.

All was silent in the chamber of death: the stillness was frightful. The agonies which Wolfstein endured were past description: for a time he neither moved nor spoke. The pale glare of the lamp fell upon the features of Olympia, from which the tinge of life had fled for ever. Suddenly, and in despite of himself, were the affections of Wolfstein turned from Megalena: he could not but now regard her as a fiend, who had been the cause of Olympia’s destruction; who had urged him to a deed from which his nature now shrunk as from annihilation. A wild paroxysm of awful alarm seized

upon him: he knelt by the side of Olympia's corpse; he kissed it, bathed it with his tears, and imprecated a thousand curses on himself. Her features, although convulsed by the agonies of violent dissolution, retained an unchanging image of loveliness, which never might fade away. Her beautiful bosom, in which her hand yet held the fatal dagger, was discoloured with blood, and those affection-beaming orbs were now closed in the never-ending slumber of the grave. Unable longer to endure a sight of so much horror, Wolfstein started up, and, forgetful of every thing save the frightful deed which he had witnessed, rushed from the Palazzo della Anzasca, and mechanically retraced his way towards his own habitation.

Not once that night had Megalena closed her eyes. Her infuriate passions had wound her soul up to a deadly calmness of expectation. She had not, during the whole of the night, retired to rest, but sat, with sanguinary patience, cursing the lagging hours that they passed so slowly, and waiting to hear tidings of death. Morning had begun to streak the eastern sky with gray, when Wolfstein hurried into the supper-room, where Megalena still sat, wildly exclaiming "The deed is done!" Megalena entreated him to be calm, and, more collectedly, to communicate the events which had occurred during the night.

"In the first place," he said in an accent of feigned horror, "the officers of justice are alarmed!"

Deadly affright chilled the soul of Megalena: she turned pale, and, gasping for breath, inquired eagerly respecting the success of his attempt.

"O God!" exclaimed Wolfstein, "that has succeeded but too well! the hapless Olympia welters in her life-blood!"

"Joy! joy!" franticly exclaimed Megalena, her eagerness for revenge overcoming, for the moment, every other feeling.

"But, Megalena," continued Wolfstein, "she fell not by my hand: no, she smiled on me in her sleep, and, when she awoke, finding me deaf to her solicitations, snatched my dagger, and buried it in her bosom."

"Did you wish to prevent the deed?" inquired Megalena.

"Oh! good God of Heaven! thou knowest my heart: I would sacrifice every remaining earthly good were Olympia again alive!"

Megalena spoke not, but a smile of exquisitely gratified malice illumined her features with terrific flame.

"We must instantly quit Genoa," said Wolfstein: "the name on the mask which I left in the Palazzo della Anzasca, will remove all doubt that I was

the murderer of Olympia. Yet indeed I care not much for death; if you will it so, Megalena, we will even, as it is, remain in Genoa."

"Oh! no, no!" eagerly cried Megalena: "Wolfstein, I love you beyond expression, and Genoa is destruction; let us seek, therefore, some retired spot, where we may for a while at least secrete ourselves. But, Wolfstein, are you persuaded that I love you? need there more proof be required than that I wished the death of another for thee? it was on that account alone that I desired the destruction of Olympia, that thou mightest be more completely and irresistibly mine."

Wolfstein answered not: the feelings of his soul were far different; the expression of his countenance plainly evinced them: and Megalena regretted that her effervescent passions should have led her to so rash an avowal of her contempt of virtue. They then separated to arrange their affairs, prior to their departure, which, on account of the pressing necessity of the case, must take place immediately. They took with them but two domestics, and, collecting all their stock of money, they were soon far from pursuit and Genoa.

CHAPTER. VII.

Yes! ‘t is the influence of that sightless fiend
Who guides my every footstep, that I feel:
An iron grasp arrests each fluttering sense.
And a fell voice howls in mine anguish’d ear.
“Wretch, thou mayst rest no more.”
— Olympia.

How sweet are the scenes endeared to us by ideas which we have cherished in the society of one we have loved! How melancholy to wander amongst them again after an absence, perhaps of years; years which have changed the tenour of our existence, — have changed even the friend, the dear friend, for whose sake alone the landscape lives in the memory, for whose sake tears flow at the each varying feature of the scenery, which catches the eye of one who has never seen them since he saw them with the being who was dear to him!

Dark, autumnal, and gloomy was the hour; the winds whistled hollow, and over the expanse of heaven was spread an unvarying sombreness of vapour: nothing was heard save the melancholy shriekings of the night-bird, which, soaring on the evening blast, broke the stillness of the scene, interrupting the meditations of frenzied enthusiasm; mingled with the sighing of the wind, which swept in languid and varying cadence amidst the leafless boughs.

Ah! of whom shall the poor outcast wanderer demand protection? Far, far has she wandered. The vice and unkindness of the world hath torn her tender heart. In whose bosom shall she repose the secret of her sufferings? Who will listen with pity to the narrative of her woe, and heal the wounds which the selfish unkindness of man hath made, and then sent her with them, unbound, on the wide and pitiless world? Lives there one whose confidence the sufferer might seek?

Cold and dreary was the night: November’s blast had chilled the air. Is the blast so pitiless as ingratitude and selfishness? Ah, no! thought the wanderer; it is unkind indeed, but not so unkind as that. Poor Eloise de St. Irvyne! many, many are in thy situation; but few have a heart so full of sensibility and excellence for the demoniac malice of man to deform, and then glut itself with hellish pleasure in the conviction of having ravaged the

most lovely of the works of their Creator. She gazed upon the sky: the moon had just risen; its full orb was occasionally shaded by a passing cloud: it rose from behind the turrets of le Chateau de St. Irvyne. The poor girl raised her eyes towards it, streaming with tears: she scarce could recognise the once-loved building. She thanked God for permitting her again to behold it; and hastened on with steps tottering from fatigue, yet nerved with the sanguineness of anticipation.

Yes, St. Irvyne was the same as when she had left it five years ago. The same ivy mantled the western tower; the same jasmine which bloomed so luxuriantly when she left it, was still there, though leafless from the season. Thus was it with poor Eloise: she had left St. Irvyne, blooming, and caressed by every one; she returned to it pale, downcast, and friendless. The jasmine encircled the twisted pillars which supported the portal. Alas! whose assistance had prevented Eloise from sinking to the earth? — no one's. She knocked at the door — it was opened, and an instant's space beheld her in the arms of a beloved sister. Needless were it to describe the mutual pleasure, needless to describe the delight, of recognition; suffice it to say, that Eloise once more enjoyed the society of her dearest friend; and, in the happiness of her society, forgot the horrors which had preceded her return to St. Irvyne.

Now were it well for a while to leave Eloise at St. Irvyne, and retrace the events which, since five years, had so darkly tinged the fate of the unsuspecting female, who trusted to the promises of man. It was a beautiful morning in May, and the loveliness of the season had spread a deeper shade of gloom over the features of Eloise, for she knew that not long would her mother live. They journeyed on towards Geneva, whither the physicians had ordered Madame de St. Irvyne to repair, as the last resort of a hope that she might, thereby, escape a rapid decline. On account of the illness of her mother, they proceeded slowly; and ere long they had entered the region of the Alps, the shades of evening, which rapidly began to increase, announced approaching night. They had expected, before this time, to have reached a town; but, either owing to a miscalculation of their route, or the remissness of the postillion, they had not yet done so. The majestic moon which hung above their heads, tinged with silver the fleecy clouds which skirted the far-seen horizon; and, borne on the soft wing of the evening zephyr, shadowy lines of vapour, at intervals, crossed her orbit; then vanishing into the dark blue expansiveness of ether, their fantastic forms, like the phantoms of

midnight, became invisible. Now might we almost suppose, that the sightless spirits of the departed good, enthroned on the genial breeze of night, watched over those whom they had loved on earth, and poured into the bosom, to the dictates of which, in this world, they had listened with idolatrous attention, that tranquillity and confidence in the goodness of the Creator, which is necessary for us to experience ere we go to the next. Such tranquillity felt Madame de St. Irvyne: she tried to stifle the ideas which arose within her mind; but the more she strove to repress them, in the more vivid characters were they imprinted on the imagination.

Now had they gained the summit of the mountain, when, suddenly, a crash announced that the carriage had given way.

"What is to be done?" inquired Eloise. The postillion appeared to take no notice of her question. "What is to be done?" again she inquired.

"Why, I scarcely know," answered the postillion; "but 't is impossible to proceed."

"Is there no house nearer than—"

"Oh yes," replied he; "here is a house quite near, but a little out of the way; and, perhaps, Ma'am'selle will not—"

"Oh, lead on, lead on to it," quickly rejoined Eloise.

They followed the postillion, and soon arrived at the house. It was large and plain; and although there were lights in some of the windows, it bore an indefinable appearance of desolation.

In a large hall sat three or four men, whose marked countenances almost announced their profession to be bandits. One of superior and commanding figure whispering to the rest, and himself advancing with the utmost and most unexpected politeness, accosted the travellers. For the ideas with which the countenance of this man inspired Eloise she in vain endeavoured to account. It appeared to her that she had seen him before; that the deep tone of his voice was known to her; and that eye, scintillating with a coruscation of mingled sternness and surprise, found some counterpart in herself. Of gigantic stature, yet formed in the mould of exactest symmetry, was the figure of the stranger who sate before Eloise. His countenance of excessive beauty even, but dark, emanated with an expression of superhuman loveliness; not that grace which may freely be admired, but acknowledged in the inmost soul by sensations mysterious, and before unexperienced. He tenderly inquired, whether the night air had injured the ladies, and pressed them to partake of a repast which the other three men

had prepared; he appeared to unbend a severity, which evidently was habitual, and by extreme brilliancy and playfulness of wit, joined to talents for conversation, possessed by few, made Madame de St. Irvyne forget that she was dying; and her daughter, as in rapturous attention she listened to each accent of the stranger, remembered no more that she was about to lose her mother.

In the stranger's society, they almost forgot the lapse of time: a pause in the conversation at last occurred.

"Can Ma'am'selle sing?" inquired the stranger.

"I can," replied Eloise; "and with pleasure."

SONG.

How swiftly through heaven's wide expanse
Bright day's resplendent colours fade!
How sweetly does the moonbeam's glance
With silver tint St. Irvyne's glade!
No cloud along the spangled air.
Is borne upon the evening breeze;
How solemn is the scene! how fair
The moonbeams rest upon the trees!
Yon dark gray turret glimmers white.
Upon it sits the mournful owl;
Along the stillness of the night.
Her melancholy shriekings roll.
But not alone on Irvyne's tower.
The silver moonbeam pours her ray;
It gleams upon the ivied bower.
It dances in the cascade's spray.
"Ah! why do dark'ning shades conceal
The hour, when man must cease to be?
Why may not human minds unveil
The dim mists of futurity?
"The keenness of the world hath torn
The heart which opens to its blast;
Despis'd, neglected, and forlorn.
Sinks the wretch in death at last."

She ceased; — the thrilling accents of her interestingly sweet voice died away in the vacancy of stillness; — yet listened the charmed auditors; their imaginations prolonged the tender strain; the uncouth attendants of the stranger were chained in silence, and the enthusiastic gaze of their host was fixed upon the timid countenance of Eloise with wild and mysterious expression. It seemed to say to Eloise, “We meet again;” — and, as the idea struck her imagination, convulsed by a feeling of indescribable and excessive awe, she started.

At last, the hour being late, they all retired. Eloise sought the couch prepared for her; her mind, perturbed by emotions, the cause of which she in vain essayed to develope, could bring its intellectual energies to act on no one particular point; her imagination was fertile, and, under its fantastic guidance, she felt her judgment and reason irresistibly fettered. The image of the fascinating, yet awful stranger, dwelt on her mind. She sank on her knees to return thanks to her Creator for his mercies; yet even then, faithless to the task on which it was employed, her mind returned to the stranger. She felt no particular affection or esteem for him; — no, she rather feared him; and, when she endeavoured to connect the chain of ideas which pressed upon her mind, tears started into her eyes, and she looked around the apartment with the timid terror of a person who converses at midnight on a subject at once awful and interesting: but poor Eloise was no philosopher; and to explain sensations like these, were even beyond the power of the wisest of them. She felt alarmed, herself, at the violence of the feelings which shook her bosom, and attempted to compose herself to sleep. Yet even in her dream was the stranger present. She thought that she met him on a flowery plain; that the feelings of her bosom, whether she would or not, impelled her towards him; that before she had been enfolded in his arms, a torrent of scintillating flame, accompanied by a terrific crash of thunder, made the earth yawn beneath her feet; — the gay vision vanished from her fancy, and, in place of the flowery plain, a rugged and desolate heath extended far before her; its monotonous solitude unbroken, save by the low and barren rocks which rose occasionally from its surface. From dreams such as these, dreams which left on her mind painful presentiments of her future life, Eloise arose, restless and unrefreshed from slumber.

Why gleams that dark eyeball upon the countenance of Eloise, as she tenderly inquired for the health of her mother? Why did an hidden expression of exulting joy light up that demoniac gaze, when Madame de

St. Irvyne said to her daughter, “I feel rather faint to-day, my child: —’Would we were at Geneva!” — It beams with hell and destruction! — Let me look again: that, when I see another eye which gleams so fiendishly, I may know that it is a villain’s. — Thus might have thought the sightless minister of the beneficence of God, as it hovered round the spotless Eloise. But, hush! what was that scream which was heard by the ear of listening enthusiasm? It was the shriek of the fair Eloise’s better genius; it screamed to see the foe of the innocent girl so near — it is fled fast to Geneva. “There, Eloise, will we meet again,” methought it whispered; whilst a low hollow tone, hoarse from the dank vapours of the grave, seemed lowly to howl in the ear of rapt Fancy, “We meet again likewise.”

Their courteous host conducted Madame de St. Irvyne and Eloise to their chaise, which was now repaired, and ready for the journey; the stranger bowed respectfully as they went away. The expression of his dark eye, as he beheld them for the last time, was even stronger than ever; it seemed not to affect her mother; but the mystic feelings which it excited in the bosom of Eloise were beyond description powerful. The paleness of Madame de St. Irvyne’s cheek, on which the only teint was an occasional and hectic flush, announced that the illness which consumed her, rapidly increased, and would soon lead her gently to the gates of death. She talked calmly of her approaching dissolution, and only regretted, that to no one protector could she entrust the care of her orphaned daughters. Marianne, her eldest daughter, had, by her mother’s particular desire, remained at the chateau; and, though much wishing to accompany her mother, she urged it no longer, when she knew Madame de St. Irvyne to be resolved against it. Now had the illness which had attacked her assumed so serious and so decided an appearance, that she could no longer doubt the event; — could no longer doubt that she was quickly about to enter a better world.

“My daughter,” said she, “there is a banker at Geneva, a worthy man, to whom I shall bequeath the guardianship of my child; on that head are all my doubts quieted. But, Eloise, my child, you are yet young; you know not the world; but bear in mind these words of your dying mother, so long as you remember herself: — When you see a man enveloped in deceit and mystery; when you see him dark, reserved, and suspicious, carefully avoid him. Should such a man seek your friendship or affection, should he seek, by any means, to confer an obligation upon you, or make you confer one on

him, spurn him from you as you would a serpent; as one who aimed to lure your unsuspecting innocence to the paths of destruction."

The affecting solemnity of her voice, as thus she spoke, touched Eloise deeply; she wept. "I must remember my mother for ever," was her almost inarticulate reply; deep sobs burst from her agitated bosom; and the varying crowds of imagery which followed each other in her mind, were too complicated to be defined. Still, though deeply grieved at the approaching death of her mother, was the mysterious stranger uppermost in her thoughts; his image excited ideas painful and unpleasant. She wished to turn the tide of them; but the more she attempted it, with the more painful recurrence of almost mechanical force, did his recollection press upon her disturbed intellect.

Eloise de St. Irvyne was a girl, whose temper and disposition was most excellent; she was, indeed, too, possessed of uncommon sensibility; yet was her mind moulded in an inferior degree of perfection. She was susceptible of prejudice, to a great degree; and resigned herself, careless of the consequences which might follow, to the feelings of the moment. Every accomplishment, it is true, she enjoyed in the highest excellence; and the very convent at which she was educated, which afforded the adventitious advantages so highly esteemed by the world, prevented her mind from obtaining that degree of expansiveness and excellence, which, otherwise, might have rendered Eloise nearer approaching to perfection; the very routine of a convent education gave a false and pernicious bias to the ideas, as, luxuriant in youth, they unfolded themselves; and those sentiments which, had they been allowed to take the turn which nature intended, would have become coadjutors of virtue, and strengtheners of that mind, which now they had rendered comparatively imbecile. Such was Eloise, and as such she required unexampled care to prevent those feelings which agitate every mind of sensibility, to get the better of the judgment which had, by an erroneous system of education, become relaxed. Her mother was about to die — who now would care for Eloise?

They entered Geneva at the close of a fine, yet sultry day. The illness of Madame de St. Irvyne had increased so as now to threaten instant danger: she was conveyed to bed. A deadly paleness sat on her cheek; it was flushed, however, as she spoke, with momentary hectics; and, as she conversed with her daughter, a fire, which almost partook of etheriality, shone in her sunken eye. It was evening; the yellow beams of the sun, as his

orb shed the parting glory on the verge of the horizon, penetrated the bed-curtains; and by their effulgence contrasted the deadliness of her countenance. The poor Eloise sat, watching, with eyes dimmed by tears, each variation in the countenance of her mother. Silent, from an ecstacy of grief, she gazed fixedly upon her, and felt every earthly hope die within her, when the conviction of a fast-approaching dissolution pressed upon her disturbed brain. Madame de St. Irvyne, at length exhausted, fell into a quiet slumber; Eloise feared to disturb her, but, motionless with grief, sate behind the curtain. Now had sunk the orb of day, and the shades of twilight began to scatter duskiness through the chamber of death; all was silent; and, save by the catchings of breath in her mother's slumber, the stillness was uninterrupted. Yet even in this awful, this terrific crisis of her existence, the mind of Eloise seemed compelled to exert its intellectual energies but on one subject; — in vain she essayed to pray; — in vain she attempted to avert the horror of her meditations, by contemplating the pallid features of her dying mother: her thoughts were not within her own control, and she trembled as she reflected on the appalling and mysterious influence which the image of a man, whom she had seen but once, and whom she neither loved nor cared for, had gained over her mind. With the indefinable terror of one who dreads to behold some phantom, Eloise fearfully cast her eyes around the gloomy apartment; occasionally she shrank from the ideal form which an unconnected imagination had conjured up, and could scarcely but suppose that the stranger's gaze, as last he had looked upon her, met her own with an horrible and mixed scintillation of mysterious cunning and interest. She felt no prepossession in his favour; she rather detested him, and gladly would never have again beheld him; yet, were the circumstances which introduced him to their notice alluded to, she would turn pale, and blush, by turns; and Jeanette, their maid, was fully persuaded in her own mind, and prided herself on her penetration in the discovery, that Ma'am'selle was violently in love with the hospitable Alpine hunter.

Madame de St. Irvyne had now awakened; she beckoned her daughter to approach: Eloise obeyed; and, kneeling, kissed the chill hand of her mother, in a transport of sorrow, and bathed it with her tears.

"Eloise," said her mother, her voice trembling from excessive weakness, "Eloise, my child, farewell — farewell for ever. I feel, I am about to die; but, before I die, willingly would I say much to my dearest daughter. You are now left on the hardhearted, pitiless world; and perhaps, oh! perhaps,

about to become an immolated victim of its treachery. Oh!—" Here, overcome by extreme pain, she fell backwards; a transient gleam of animation lighted up her expressive countenance; she smiled, and — expired. All was still; and over the gloomy chamber reigned silence and horror. The yellow moonbeam, with sepulchral effulgence, gleamed on the countenance of her who had expired, and lighted her features, sweet even in death, with a dire and horrible contrast to the dimness which prevailed around! — Ah! such was the contrast of the peace enjoyed by the spirit of the departed one, with the misery which awaited the wretched Eloise. Poor Eloise! she had now lost almost her only friend!

In excessive and silent grief, knelt the mourning girl; she spoke not, she wept-not; her sorrow was toavo violent for tears, but, oh! her heart was torn by pangs of unspeakable acuteness. But even amid the alarm which so melancholy an event must have excited, the idea of the stranger in the Alps sublimed the soul of Eloise to the highest degree of horror, and despair the most infuriate. For the ideas which crowded into her mind at this crisis, so eventful, so terrific, she endeavoured to account; but, alas! her attempt was fruitless! Still knelt she; still did she press to her burning lips the lifeless hand of departed excellence, when the morning's ray announced to her, that longer continuing there might excite suspicion of intellectual derangement. She arose, therefore, and, quitting the apartment, announced the melancholy event which had taken place. She gave orders for the funeral; it was to be solemnized as soon as decency would permit, as the poor friendless Eloise wished speedily to quit Geneva. She wrote to announce the fatal event to her sister. Slowly dragged the time. Eloise followed to its latest bed, the corpse of her mother, and was returning from the convent, when a stranger put into her hand a note, and quickly disappeared: —

"Will Eloise de St. Irvyne meet her friend at — Abbey, to-morrow night, at ten o'clock?"

CHAPTER. VIII.

— Why then unbidden gush'd the tear? —
Then would cold shudderings seize his brain.
As gasping he labour'd for breath;
The strange gaze of his meteor eye.
Which, frenzied, and rolling dreadfully.
Glar'd with hideous gleam.
Would chill like the spectre gaze of Death.
As, conjur'd by feverish dream.
He seems o'er the sick man's couch to stand.
And shakes the fell lance in his skeleton hand.
— Wandering Jew.

Yes; — they fled from Genoa; they had eluded pursuit and justice, but could not escape the torments of an outraged and avenging conscience, which, with stings the most acute, pursued them whithersoever they might go. Fortune even seemed to favour them; for fortune will, sometimes, in this world, appear to side with the wicked. Wolfstein had received notice, that an uncle, possessed of immense wealth, had died in Bohemia, and bequeathed to him the whole of his estate. Thither then, with Megalena, went Wolfstein. Their journey produced no event of consequence; suffice it to say, that they arrived at the spot where Wolfstein's new possessions were situated.

Dark and desolate were the scenes which surrounded the no less desolate castle. Gloomy heaths, in unvarying sadness of immensity, stretched far and wide. A scathed pine or oak, blasted by the thunderbolts of heaven, alone broke the monotonous sameness of the imagery. Needless were it to describe the castle, built like all those of the Bohemian barons, in mingled Gothic and barbarian architecture. Over the dark expanse the dim moon beaming, and faintly, with its sepulchral radiance, dispersing the thickness of the vapours which lowered around (for her waning horn, which hung low above the horizon, added but tenfold horror to the terrific desolation of the scene); the night-raven pouring on the dull ear of evening her frightful screams, and breaking on the otherwise uninterrupted stillness, — were the melancholy greetings to their new habitation.

They alighted at the antique entrance, and, passing through a vast and comfortless hall, were conducted into a saloon not much less so. The coolness of the evening, for it was late in the autumn, made the wood fire, which had been lighted, disperse a degree of comfort; and Wolfstein, having arranged his domestic concerns, continued talking with Megalena until midnight.

"But you have never yet correctly explained to me," said Megalena, "the mystery which encircled that strange man whom we met at the inn at Breno. I think I have seen him once since, or I should not now have thought of the circumstance."

"Indeed, Megalena, I know of no mystery. I suppose the man was mad, or wished to make us think so; for my part, I have never thought of him since; nor ever intend to think of him."

"Do you not?" exclaimed a voice, which enchained motionless to his seat the horror-struck Wolfstein — when turning round, and starting in agonized frenzy from his chair, Ginotti himself — Ginotti — from whose terrific gaze never had he turned unappalled, stood in cool and fearless contempt before him!

"Do you not?" continued the mysterious stranger." Never again intendest thou to think of me? — me! who have watched each expanding idea, conscious to what I was about to apply them, conscious of the great purpose for which each was formed. Ah! Wolfstein, by my agency shalt thou—" He paused, assuming a smile expressive of exultation and superiority.

"Oh! do with me what thou wilt, strange, inexplicable being! — Do with me what thou wilt!" exclaimed Wolfstein, as an ecstacy of frenzied terror overpowered his astonished senses. Megalena still sat unmoved: she was surprised, it is true; but most was she surprised, that an event like this should have power so to shake Wolfstein; for even then he stood gazing in enhorrored silence on the majestic figure of Ginotti.

"Fool, then, that thou art, to deny me!" continued Ginotti, in a tone less solemn, but more severe. "Wilt thou promise me that, when I come to demand what thou covenantedst with me at Breno, I meet no fears, no scruples, but that, then, thou wilt perform what there thou didst swear, and that this oath shall be inviolable?"

"It shall," replied Wolfstein.

"Swear it."

"As I keep my vows with you, may God reward me hereafter!"

“‘Tis done then,” returned Ginotti. “Ere long shall I claim the performance of this covenant — now farewell.” Speaking thus, Ginotti dashed away; and, mounting a horse which stood at the gate, sped swiftly across the heath. His form lessened in the clear moonlight; and, when it was no longer visible to the straining eyeballs of Wolfstein, he felt, as it were, a spell which had enthralled him, to be dissolved.

Reckless of Megalena’s earnest entreaties, he threw himself into a chair, in deep and gloomy melancholy; he answered them not, but, immersed in a train of corroding ideas, remained silent. Even when retired to repose, and he could, occasionally, sink into a transitory slumber, would he again start from it, as he thought that Ginotti’s majestic form leaned over him, and that the glance which, last, his fearful eye had thrown, chilled his breast with indescribable agony. Slowly lagged the time to Wolfstein; Ginotti, though now gone, and far away perhaps, dwelt in his disturbed mind; his image was there imprinted in characters terrific and indelible. Oft would he wander along the desolate heath; on every blast of wind which sighed over the scattered remnants of what was once a forest, Ginotti’s, the terrific Ginotti’s voice seemed to float; and in every dusky recess, favoured by the descending shades of gloomy night, his form appeared to lurk, and, with frightful glare, his eye to penetrate the conscience-stricken Wolfstein as he walked. A falling leaf, or a hare starting from her heathy seat, caused him to shrink with affright; yet, though dreading loneliness, he was irresistibly compelled to seek for solitude. Megalena’s charms had now no longer power to speak comfort to his soul: ephemeral are the friendships of the wicked, and involuntary disgust follows the attachment founded on the visionary fabric of passion or interest. It sinks in the merited abyss of ennui, or is followed by apathy and carelessness, which amply its origin deserved.

The once ardent and excessive passion of Wolfstein for Megalena, was now changed into disgust and almost detestation; he sought to conceal it from her, but it was evident, in spite of his resolution. He regarded her as a woman capable of the most shocking enormities; since, without any adequate temptation to vice, she had become sufficiently depraved to consider an inconsequent crime the wilful and premeditated destruction of a fellow-creature; still, whether it were from the indolence which he had contracted, or an indefinably sympathetic connexion of soul, which forbade them to part during their mortal existence, was Wolfstein irremediably linked to his mistress, who was as depraved as himself, though originally of

a better disposition. He likewise had, at first, resisted the allurements of vice; but, overpowered by its incitements, had resigned himself, indeed reluctantly, to its influence. But Megalena had courted its advances, and endeavoured to conquer neither the suggestions of crime, nor the dictates of a nature prone to the attacks of appetite — let me not call it passion.

Fast advanced winter: cheerless and solitary were the days. Wolfstein, occasionally, followed the chase; but even that was wearisome: and the bleeding image of the murdered Olympia, or the still more dreaded idea of the terrific Ginotti, haunted him in the midst of its tumultuous pleasures, and embittered every instant of his existence. The pale corpse too of Cavigni, blackened by poison, reigned in his chaotic imagination, and stung his soul with tenfold remorse, when he reflected that he had murdered one who never had injured him, for the sake of a being whose depraved society every succeeding day rendered more monotonous and insipid.

It was one evening when, according to his custom, Wolfstein wandered late: it was in the beginning of December, and the weather was peculiarly mild for the season and latitude. Over the cerulean expanse of ether the dim moon, shrouded in the fleeting fragments of vapour, which, borne on the pinions of the northern blast, crossed her pale orb; at intervals, the dismal hooting of the owl, which, searching for prey, flitted her white wings over the dusky heath; the silver beams which slept on the outline of the far-seen forests, and the melancholy stillness, uninterrupted save by these concomitants of gloom, conduced to sombre reflection. Wolfstein reclined upon the heath; he retraced, in mental review, the past events of his life, and shuddered at the darkness of his future destiny. He strove to repent of his crimes; but, though conscious of the connexion which existed between the ideas, as often as repentance presented itself to his mind, Ginotti rushed upon his troubled imagination, and a dark veil seemed to separate him for ever from contrition, notwithstanding he was constantly subjected to the tortures inflicted by it. At last, wearied with the corroding recollections, the acme of which progressively increased, he bent his steps again towards his habitation.

As he was entering the portal, a grasp of iron arrested his arm, and, turning round, he recognised the tall figure of Ginotti, which enveloped in a mantle, had leaned against a jutting buttress. Amazement, for a time, chained the faculties of Wolfstein in motionless surprise: at last he

recollected himself, and, in a voice trembling from agitation, inquired, did he now demand the performance of the promise?

“I come,” he said, “I come to demand it, Wolfstein! Art thou willing to perform what thou hast promised? — but come—”

A degree of solemnity, mixed with concealed fierceness, toned his voice as he spoke; yet was he fixed in the attitude in which first he had addressed Wolfstein. The pale ray of the moon fell upon his dark features, and his coruscating eye fixed on his trembling victim’s countenance, flashed with almost intolerable brilliancy. A chill horror darted through Wolfstein’s sickening frame; his brain swam around wildly, and most appalling presentiments of what was about to happen, pressed upon his agonized intellect. “Yes, yes, I have promised, and I will perform the covenant I have entered into,” said Wolfstein; “I swear to you that I will!” and as he spoke, a kind of mechanical and inspired feeling steeled his soul to fortitude; it seemed to arise independently of himself; nor could he, though he eagerly desired to do so, control, in the least, his own resolves. Such an impulse as this had first induced him to promise at all. Ah! how often in Ginotti’s absence had he resisted it! but when the mysterious disposer of the events of his existence was before him, a consciousness of the inutility of his refusal compelled him to submit to the mandates of a being, whom his heart sickening to acknowledge, it unwillingly confessed as a superior.

“Come,” continued Ginotti; “the hour is late, I must dispatch.”

Unresisting, yet speaking not, Wolfstein conducted Ginotti to an apartment.

“Bring wine, and light a fire,” said he to the servant, who quickly obeyed him. Wolfstein swallowed an overflowing goblet, hoping thereby to acquire courage; for he found that, with every moment of Ginotti’s stay, the visionary and awful terrors of his mind augmented.

“Do you not drink?”

“No,” replied Ginotti, sullenly.

A pause ensured; during which the eyes of Ginotti, glaring with demoniacal scintillations, spoke tenfold terrors to the soul of Wolfstein. He knitted his brows and bit his lips, in vain attempting to appear unembarrassed. “Wolfstein!” at last said Ginotti, breaking the fearful silence; “Wolfstein!”

The colour fled from the cheek of his victim, as thus Ginotti spoke: he moved his posture, and awaited, in anxious and horrible solicitude, the

declaration which was, as he supposed, to ensue. “My name, my family, and the circumstances which have attended my career through existence, it neither boots you to know, nor me to declare.”

“Does it not?” said Wolfstein, scarcely knowing what to say; yet convinced, from the pause, that something was expected.

“No! nor canst thou, nor any other existing being, even attempt to dive into the mysteries which envelope me. Let it be sufficient for you to know, that every event in your life has not only been known to me, but has occurred under my particular machinations.”

Wolfstein started. The terror which had blanched his cheek now gave way to an expression of fierceness and surprise; he was about to speak, but Ginotti, noticing not his motion, thus continued:

“Every opening idea which has marked, in so decided and so eccentric an outline, the fiat of your future destiny, has not been unknown to or unnoticed by me. I rejoiced to see in you, whilst young, the progress of that genius which in mature time would entitle you to the reward which I destine for you, and for you alone. Even when far, far away, when the ocean perhaps has roared between us, have I known your thoughts, Wolfstein; yet have I known them neither by conjecture nor inspiration. Never would your mind have attained that degree of expansion or excellence had not I watched over its every movement, and taught the sentiment, as it unfolded itself, to despise contented vulgarity. For this, and for an event far more important than any your existence yet has been subjected to, have I watched over you: say, Wolfstein, have I watched in vain?”

Each feeling of resentment vanished from Wolfstein’s bosom, as the mysterious intruder spoke: his voice at last died, in a clear and melancholy cadence, away; and his expressive eye, divested of its fierceness and mystery, rested on Wolfstein’s countenance with a mild benignity.

“No, no; thou hast not watched in vain, mysterious disposer of my existence. Speak! I burn with curiosity and solicitude to learn for what thou hast thus superintended me:” and as thus he spoke, a feeling of resistless anxiety to know what would be the conclusion of the night’s adventure, took place of horror. Inquiringly he gazed on the countenance of Ginotti, the features of whom were brightened with unwonted animation. “Wolfstein,” said Ginotti, “often hast thou sworn that I should rest in the grave in peace: — now listen.”

CHAP. IX.

If Satan had never fallen.
Hell had been made for thee.
— The Revenge.

Ah! poor, unsuspecting innocence! and is that fair flower about to perish in the blasts of dereliction and unkindness? Demon indeed must he be who could gaze on those mildly-beaming eyes, on that perfect form, the emblem of sensibility, and yet plunge the spotless mind of which it was an index, into a sea of repentance and unavailing sorrow. I should scarce suppose even a demon would act so, were there not many with hearts more depraved even than those of fiends, who first have torn some unsophisticated soul from the pinnacle of excellence, on which it sat smiling, and then triumphed in their hellish victory when it writhed in agonized remorse, and strove to hide its unavailing regret in the dust from which the fabric of her virtues had arisen. “Ah! I fear me, the unsuspecting girl will go;” she knows not the malice and the wiles of perjured man — and she is gone!

It was late in the evening, and Eloise had returned from her mother’s funeral, sad and melancholy; yet even amidst the oppression of grief, surprise and astonishment, pleasure and thankfulness, that any one should notice her, possessed her mind as she read over and over the characters traced on the note which she still held in her hand. The hour was late; the moon was down, yet countless stars bedecked the almost boundless hemisphere. The mild beams of Hesper slept on the glassy surface of the lake, as, scarcely agitated by the zephyr of evening, its waves rolled in slow succession; the solemn umbrage of the pine-trees, mingled with the poplar, threw their undefined shadows on the water; and the nightingale, sitting solitary in the hawthorn, poured on the listening stillness of evening, her grateful lay of melancholy. Hark! her full strains swell on the silence of night, and now they die away, with lengthened and solemn cadence, insensibly into the breeze, which lingers, with protracted sweep, along the valley. Ah! with what enthusiastic ecstacy of melancholy does he whose friend, whose dear friend, is far, far away, listen to such strains as these! perhaps he has heard them with that friend, — with one he loves: never again may they meet his ear. Alas! ‘t is melancholy; I even now see him sitting on the rock which looks over the lake, in frenzied listlessness; and counting in mournful review, the days which are past since they fled so quickly with one who was dear to him.

It was to the ruined abbey which stood on the southern side of the lake that, so swiftly, Eloise is hastening. A presentiment of awe filled her mind; she gazed, in inquiring terror, around her, and scarce could persuade herself that shapeless forms lurked not in the gloomy recesses of the scenery.

She gained the abbey; in melancholy fallen grandeur its vast ruins reared their pointed casements to the sky. Masses of disjointed stone were scattered around; and, save by the whirrings of the bats, the stillness which reigned, was uninterrupted. Here then was Eloise to meet the strange one who professed himself to be her friend. Alas! poor Eloise believed him. It yet wanted an hour to the time of appointment; the expiration of that hour Eloise awaited. The abbey brought to her recollection a similar ruin which stood near St. Irvyne; it brought with it the remembrance of a song which Marianne had composed soon after her brother's death. She sang, though in a low voice:

SONG.

How stern are the woes of the desolate mourner.

As he bends in still grief o'er the hallowed bier.
As enanguish'd he turns from the laugh of the scorner.
And drops, to perfection's remembrance, a tear;
When floods of despair down his pale cheek are streaming.
When no blissful hope on his bosom is beaming.
Or, if lull'd for a while, soon he starts from his dreaming.
And finds torn the soft ties to affection so dear.
Ah! when shall day dawn on the night of the grave.
Or summer succeed to the winter of death?
Rest awhile, hapless victim, and Heaven will save
The spirit, that faded away with the breath.
Eteruity points in its amaranth bower.
Where no clouds of fate o'er the sweet prospect lower.
Unspeakable pleasure, of goodness the dower.
When woe fades away like the mist of the heath.

She ceased: the melancholy cadence of her angelic voice died in faint reverberations of echo away, and once again reigned stillness.

Now fast approached the hour; and, ere ten had struck, a stranger of towering and gigantic proportions walked along the ruined refectory;

without stopping to notice other objects, he advanced swiftly to Eloise, who sat on a mishapen piece of ruin, and, throwing aside the mantle which enveloped his figure, discovered to her astonished sight the stranger of the Alps, who of late had been incessantly present to her mind. Amazement, for a time, chained each faculty in stupefaction; she would have started from her seat, but the stranger, with gentle violence grasping her hand, compelled her to remain where she was.

"Eloise," said the stranger, in a voice of the most fascinating tenderness —"Eloise!"

The softness of his accents changed, in an instant, what was passing in the bosom of Eloise. She felt no surprise that he knew her name; she experienced no dread at this mysterious meeting with a person, at the bare mention of whose name she was wont to tremble: no, the ideas which filled her mind were indefinable. She gazed upon his countenance for a moment, then, hiding her face in her hands, sobbed loudly.

"What afflicts you, Eloise?" said the stranger: "how cruel, that such a breast as thine should be tortured by pain!"

"Ah!" cried Eloise, forgetting that she spoke to a stranger; "how can one avoid sorrow, when there, perhaps, is scarce a being in the world whom I can call my friend; when there is no one on whom I lay claim for protection?"

"Say not, Eloise," cried the stranger, reproachfully, yet benignly; "say not that you can claim none as a friend — you may claim me. Ah! that I had ten thousand existences, that each might be devoted to the service of one whom I love more than myself! Make me then the repository of your every sorrow and secret. I love you, indeed I do, Eloise, and why will you doubt me?"

"I do not doubt you, stranger," replied the unsuspecting girl; "why should I doubt you? for you could have no interest in saying so, if you did not. — I thank you for loving one who is quite, quite friendless; and, if you will allow me to be your friend, I will love you too. I never loved any one, before, but my poor mother and Marianne. Will you then, if you are a friend to me, come and live with me and Marianne, at St. Irvyne's?"

"St. Irvyne's!" exclaimed the stranger, almost convulsively, as he interrupted her; then, as fearing to betray his emotions, he paused, yet quitted not the grasp of Eloise's hand, which trembled within his with feelings which her mind distrusted not.

“Yes, sweet Eloise, I love you indeed.” At last he said, affectionately, “And I thank you much for believing me; but I cannot live with you at St. Irvyne’s. Farewell, for to-night, however; for my poor Eloise has need of sleep.” He then was quitting the abbey, when Eloise stopped him to inquire his name.

“Frederic de Nempere.”

“Ah! then I shall recollect Frederio de Nempere, as the name of a friend, even if I never again behold him.”

“Indeed I am not faithless; soon shall I see you again. Farewell, beloved Eloise.” Thus saying, with rapid step he quitted the ruin.

Though he was now gone, the sound of his tender farewell yet seemed to linger on the ear of Eloise; but with each moment of his absence, became lessened the conviction of his friendship, and heightened the suspicions which, though unaccountable to herself, possessed her bosom. She could not conceive what motive could have led her to own her love for one whom she feared, and felt a secret terror, from the conviction of the resistless empire which he possessed within her: yet though she shrank from the bare idea of ever becoming his, did she ardently, though scarcely would she own it to herself, desire again to see him.

Eloise now returned to Geneva: she resigned herself to sleep, but even in her dreams was the image of Nempere present to her imagination. Ah! poor deluded Eloise, didst thou think a man would merit thy love through disinterestedness? didst thou think that one who supposed himself superior, yet inferior in reality, to you, in the scale of existent beings, would desire thy society from love? yet superior as the fool here supposes himself to be to the creature whom he injures, superior as he boasts himself, he may howl with the fiends of darkness, in never-ending misery, whilst thou shalt receive, at the throne of the God whom thou hast loved, the rewards of that unsuspecting excellence, which he who boasts his superiority, shall suffer for trampling upon. Reflect on this, ye libertines, and, in the full career of the lasciviousness which has unfitted your souls for enjoying the slightest real happiness here or hereafter, tremble! Tremble! I say; for the day of retribution will arrive. But the poor Eloise need not tremble; the victims of your detested cunning need not fear that day: no! — then will the cause of the broken-hearted be avenged, by Him to whom their wrongs cry for redress.

Within a few miles of Geneva, Nempere possessed a country-house: thither did he persuade Eloise to go with him; “For,” said he, “though I cannot come to St. Irvyne’s, yet my friend will live with me.”

“Yes indeed I will,” replied Eloise; for whatever she might feel when he was absent, in his presence she felt insensibly softened, and a sentiment nearly approaching to love would, at intervals, take possession of her soul. Yet was it by no means an easy task to lure Eloise from the paths of virtue; it is true she knew but little, nor was the expansion of her mind such as might justify the exultations of a fiend at a triumph over her virtue; yet was it that very timid, simple innocence, which prevented Eloise from understanding to what the deep-laid sophistry of her false friend tended; and, not understanding it, she could not be influenced by its arguments. Besides, the principles and morals of Eloise were such, as could not easily be shaken by the allurements which temptation might throw out to her unsophisticated innocence.

“Why,” said Nempere, “are we taught to believe that the union of two who love each other is wicked, unless authorized by certain rites and ceremonials, which certainly cannot change the tenour of sentiments which it is destined that these two people should entertain of each other?”

“It is, I suppose,” answered Eloise calmly, “because God has willed it so; besides,” continued she, blushing at she knew not what, “it would—”

“And is then the superior and towering soul of Eloise subjected to sentiments and prejudices so stale and vulgar as these?” interrupted Nempere indignantly. “Say, Eloise, do not you think it an insult to two souls, united to each other in the irrefragable covenants of love and congeniality; to promise, in the sight of a Being whom they know not, that fidelity which is certain otherwise?”

“But I do know that Being!” cried Eloise with warmth; “and when I cease to know him, may I die! I pray to him every morning, and, when I kneel at night, I thank him for the mercy which he has shown to a poor friendless girl like me! He is the protector of the friendless, and I love and adore him!”

“Unkind Eloise! how canst thou call thyself friendless? Surely, the adoration of two beings unfettered by restraint, must be most acceptable! — But, come, Eloise, this conversation is nothing to the purpose: I see we both think alike, although the terms in which we express our sentiments are different. Will you sing to me, dear Eloise?” Willingly did Eloise fetch her

harp; she wished not to scrutinize what was passing in her mind, but, after a short prelude, thus began:

SONG.

I.

Ah! faint are her limbs, and her footstep is weary.
Yet far must the desolate wanderer roam;
Though the tempest is stern, and the mountain is dreary.
She must quit at deep midnight her pitiless home.
I see her swift foot dash the dew from the whortle.
As she rapidly hastes to the green grove of myrtle;
And I hear, as she wraps round her figure the kirtle.
"Stay thy boat on the lake, — dearest Henry, I come."

II.

High swell'd in her bosom the throb of affection.
As lightly her form bounded over the lea.
And arose in her mind every dear recollection:
"I come, dearest Henry, and wait but for thee."
How sad, when dear hope every sorrow is soothing.
When sympathy's swell the soft bosom is moving.
And the mind the mild joys of affection is proving.
Is the stern voice of fate that bids happiness flee!

III.

Oh! dark lower'd the clouds' on that horrible eve.
And the moon dimly gleam'd through the tempested air;
Oh! how could fond visions such softness deceive?
Oh! how could false hope rend a bosom so fair?
Thy love's pallid corse the wild surges are laving.
O'er his form the fierce swell of the tempest is raving;
But, fear not, parting spirit; thy goodness is saving.
In eternity's bowers, a seat for thee there.
"How soft is that strain!" cried Nempere, as she concluded.

“Ah!” said Eloise, sighing deeply; “It is a melancholy song; my poor brother wrote it, I remember, about ten days before he died. ‘Tis a gloomy tale concerning him; he ill deserved the fate he met. Some future time I will tell it you; but now, ‘tis very late. — Good-night.”

Time passed, and Nempere, finding that he must proceed more warily, attempted no more to impose upon the understanding of Eloise by such palpably baseless arguments; yet, so great and so unaccountable an influence had he gained on her unsuspecting soul, that ere long, on the altar of vice, pride, and malice, was immolated the innocence of the spotless Eloise. Ah, ye proud! in the severe consciousness of unblemished reputation, in the fallacious opinion of the world, why turned ye away, as if fearful of contamination, when yon poor frail one drew near? See the tears which steal adown her cheek! — She has repented, ye have not!

And thinkest thou, libertine, from a principle of depravity — thinkest thou that thou hast raised thyself to the level of Eloise, by trying to sink her to thine own? — No! — Hopest thou that thy curse has passed away unheeded or unseen? The God whom thou hast insulted has marked thee! — In the everlasting tablets of heaven, is thine offence written! — but poor Eloise’s crime is obliterated by the mercy of Him, who knows the innocence of her heart.

Yes — thy sophistry hath prevailed, Nempere!—’t is but blackening the memoir of thine offences! — Hark! what shriek broke upon the enthusiastic silence of twilight?—’T was the fancied scream of one who loved Eloise long ago, but now is — dead. It warns thee — alas! ‘t is unavailing!!—’T is fled, but not for ever.

It is evening; the moon, which rode in cloudless and unsullied majesty, in the leaden-coloured east, hath hidden her pale beams in a dusky cloud, as if blushing to contemplate a scene of so much wickedness.

‘T is done; and amidst the vows of a transitory delirium of pleasure, regret, horror, and misery, arise! they shake their Gorgon locks at Eloise! appalled she shudders with affright, and shrinks from the contemplation of the consequences of her imprudence. Beware, Eloise! — a precipice, a frightful precipice yawns at thy feet! advance yet a step further, and thou perishest! — No, give not up thy religion — it is that alone which can support thee under the miseries, with which imprudence has so darkly marked the progress of thine existence!

CHAPTER. X.

The elements respect their Maker's seal!
Still like the scathed pine-tree's height.
Braving the tempests of the night.
Have I' scap'd the bickering flame.
Like the scath'd pine, which a monument stands
Of faded grandeur, which the brands
Of the tempest-shaken air
Have riven on the desolate heath;
Yet it stands majestic even in death.
And rears its wild from there.
— Wandering Jew.

Yet, in an attitude of attention, Wolfstein was fixed, and, gazing upon Ginotti's countenance, awaited his narrative.

"Wolfstein," said Ginotti, "the circumstances which I am about to communicate to you are, many of them, you may think, trivial; but I must be minute, and, however the recital may excite your astonishment, suffer me to proceed without interruption."

Wolfstein bowed affirmatively — Ginotti thus proceeded:

"From my earliest youth, before it was quenched by complete satiation, curiosity, and a desire of unveiling the latent mysteries of nature, was the passion by which all the other emotions of my mind were intellectually organized. This desire first led me to cultivate, and with success, the various branches of learning which led to the gates of wisdom. I then applied myself to the cultivation of philosophy, and the éclât with which I pursued it, exceeded my most sanguine expectations. Love I cared not for; and wondered why men perversely sought to ally themselves with weakness. Natural philosophy at last became the peculiar science to which I directed my eager inquiries; thence was I led into a train of labyrinthic meditations. I thought of death — I shuddered when I reflected, and shrank in horror from the idea, selfish and self-interested as I was, of entering a new existence to which I was a stranger. I must either dive into the recesses of futurity, or I must not, I cannot die.—'Will not this nature — will not the matter of which it is composed, exist to all eternity? Ah! I know it will; and, by the exertions of the energies with which nature has gifted me, well I know it

shall.' This was my opinion at that time: I then believed that there existed no God. Ah! at what an exorbitant price have I bought the conviction that there is one!!! Believing that priestcraft and superstition were all the religion which man ever practised, it could not be supposed that I thought there existed supernatural beings of any kind. I believed nature to be self-sufficient and excelling; I supposed not, therefore, that there could be any thing beyond nature.

"I was now about seventeen: I had dived into the depths of metaphysical calculations. With sophistical arguments had I convinced myself of the non-existence of a First Cause, and, by every combined modification of the essences of matter, had I apparently proved that no existences could possibly be, unseen by human vision. I had lived, hitherto, completely for myself; I cared not for others; and, had the hand of fate swept from the list of the living every one of my youthful associates, I should have remained immoved and fearless. I had not a friend in the world; — I cared for nothing but self. Being fond of calculating the effects of poison, I essayed one, which I had composed, upon a youth who had offended me; he lingered a month, and then expired in agonies the most terrific. It was returning from his funeral, which all the students of the college where I received my education (Salamanca), had attended, that a train of the strangest thought pressed upon my mind. I feared, more than ever, now, to die; and, although I had no right to form hopes or expectations for longer life than is allotted to the rest of mortals, yet did I think it were possible to protract existence. And why, reasoned I with myself, relapsing into melancholy, why am I to suppose that these muscles or fibres are made of stuff more durable than those of other men? I have no right to suppose otherwise than that, at the end of the time allotted by nature, for the existence of the atoms which compose my being, I must, like all other men, perish, perhaps everlastingly. — Here in the bitterness of my heart, I cursed that nature and chance which I believed in; and, in a paroxysmal frenzy of contending passions, cast myself, in desperation, at the foot of a lofty ash-tree, which reared its fantastic form over a torrent which dashed below.

"It was midnight; far had I wandered from Salamanca; the passions which agitated my brain, almost to delirium, had added strength to my nerves, and swiftness to my feet; but after many hours' incessant walking, I began to feel fatigued. No moon was up, nor did one star illume the hemisphere. The sky was veiled by a thick covering of clouds; and, to my

heated imagination, the winds, which in stern cadence swept along the night-scene, whistled tidings of death and annihilation. I gazed on the torrent, foaming beneath my feet; it could scarcely be distinguished through the thickness of the gloom, save at intervals, when the white-crested waves dashed at the base of the bank on which I stood. ‘T was then that I contemplated self-destruction; I had almost plunged into the tide of death, had rushed upon the unknown regions of eternity, when the soft sound of a bell from a neighbouring convent, was wafted in the stillness of the night. It struck a chord in unison with my soul; it vibrated on the secret springs of rapture. I thought no more of suicide, but, reseating myself at the root of the ash-tree, burst into a flood of tears; — never had I wept before; the sensation was new to me; it was inexplicably pleasing. I reflected by what rules of science I could account for it: there philosophy failed me. I acknowledged its inefficacy; and, almost at that instant, allowed the existence of a superior and beneficent Spirit, in whose image is made the soul of man; but quickly chasing these ideas, and, overcome by excessive and unwonted fatigue of mind and body, I laid my head upon a jutting projection of the tree, and, forgetful of every thing around me, sank into a profound and quiet slumber. Quiet, did I say? No — It was not quiet. I dreamed that I stood on the brink of a most terrific precipice, far, far above the clouds, amid whose dark forms which lowered beneath, was seen the dashing of a stupendous cataract: its roarings were borne to mine ear by the blast of night. Above me rose, fearfully embattled and rugged, fragments of enormous rocks, tinged by the dimly gleaming moon; their loftiness, the grandeur of their mishapen proportions, and their bulk, staggering the imagination; and scarcely could the mind itself scale the vast loftiness of their aerial summits. I saw the dark clouds pass by, borne by the impetuosity of the blast, yet felt no wind myself. Methought darkly gleaming forms rode on their almost palpable prominences.

“Whilst thus I stood, gazing on the expansive gulf which yawned before me, methought a silver sound stole on the quietude of night. The moon became as bright as polished silver, and each star sparkled with scintillations of inexpressible whiteness. Pleasing images stole imperceptibly upon my senses, when a ravishingly sweet strain of dulcet melody seemed to float around. Now it was wafted nearer, and now it died away in tones to melancholy dear. Whilst I thus stood enraptured, louder swelled the strain of seraphic harmony; it vibrated on my inmost soul, and a

mysterious softness lulled each impetuous passion to repose. I gazed in eager anticipation of curiosity on the scene before me; for a mist of silver radiance rendered every object but myself imperceptible; yet was it brilliant as the noon-day sun. Suddenly, whilst yet the full strain swelled along the empyrean sky, the mist in one place seemed to dispart, and, through it, to roll clouds of deepest crimson. Above them, and seemingly reclining on the viewless air, was a form of most exact and superior symmetry. Rays of brilliancy, surpassing expression, fell from his burning eye, and the emanations from his countenance tinted the transparent clouds below with silver light. The phantasm advanced towards me; it seemed then, to my imagination, that his figure was borne on the sweet strain of music which filled the circumambient air. In a voice which was fascination itself, the being addressed me, saying, 'Wilt thou come with me? wilt thou be mine?' I felt a decided wish never to be his. 'No, no,' I unhesitatingly cried, with a feeling which no language can either explain or describe. No sooner had I uttered these words than methought a sensation of deadly horror chilled my sickening frame; an earthquake rocked the precipice beneath my feet; the beautiful being vanished; clouds, as of chaos, rolled around, and from their dark masses flashed incessant meteors. I heard a deafening noise on every side; it appeared like the dissolution of nature; the blood-red moon, whirled from her sphere, sank beneath the horizon. My neck was grasped firmly, and, turning round in an agony of horror, I beheld a form more hideous than the imagination of man is capable of portraying, whose proportions, gigantic and deformed, were seemingly blackened by the inerasible traces of the thunderbolts of God; yet in its hideous and detestable countenance, though seemingly far different, I thought I could recognise that of the lovely vision: 'Wretch!' it exclaimed, in a voice of exulting thunder; 'saidst thou that thou wouldst not be mine? Ah! thou art mine beyond redemption; and I triumph in the conviction, that no power can ever make thee otherwise. Say, art thou willing to be mine?' Saying this, he dragged me to the brink of the precipice: the contemplation of approaching death frenzied my brain to the highest pitch of horror. 'Yes, yes, I am thine,' I exclaimed. No sooner had I pronounced these words, than the visionary scene vanished, and I awoke. But even when awake, the contemplation of what I had suffered, whilst under the influence of sleep, pressed upon my disordered fancy; my intellect, wild with unconquerable emotions, could fix on no one particular

point to exert its energies; they were strained beyond their power of exerting.

“Ever, from that day, did a deep-corroding melancholy usurp the throne of my soul. At last during the course of my philosophical inquiries, I ascertained the method by which man might exist for ever, and it was connected with my dream. It would unfold a tale of too much horror to trace, in review, the circumstances as then they occurred; suffice it to say, that I became acquainted that a superior being really exists: and ah! how dear a price have I paid for the knowledge! To one man, alone, Wolfstein, may I communicate this secret of immortal life: then must I forego my claim to it, — and oh! with what pleasure shall I forego it! To you I bequeath the secret; but first you must swear that if — you wish God may —”

“I swear,” cried Wolfstein, in a transport of delight; burning ecstacy revelled through his veins; pleasurable coruscations were emitted from his eyes. “I swear,” continued he; “and if ever — may God—” “Needless were it for me,” continued Ginotti, “to expatiate further upon themeans which I have used to become master over your every action; that will be sufficiently explained when you have followed my directions. Take,” continued Ginotti, “ — and — and — mix them according to the directions which this book will communicate to you. Seek, at midnight, the ruined abbey near the castle of St. Irvyne, in France; and there — I need say no more — there you will meet with me.”

CHAPTER. XI.

The varying occurrences of time and change, which bring anticipation of better days, brought none to the hapless Eloise. Nempere now having gained the point which his villany had projected, felt little or no attachment left for the unhappy victim of his baseness; he treated her indeed most cruelly, and his unkindness added greatly to the severity of her afflictions. One day, when, weighed down by the extreme asperity of her woes, Eloise sat leaning her head on her hand, and mentally retracing, in sickening and mournful review, the concatenated occurrences which had led her to become what she was, she sought to change the bent of her ideas, but in vain. The feelings of her soul were but exacerbated by the attempt to quell them. Her dear brother's death, that brother so tenderly beloved, added a sting to her sensations. Was there any one on earth to whom she was now attracted by a wish of pouring in the friend's bosom ideas and feelings indefinable to any one else? Ah, no! that friend existed not; never, never more would she know such a friend. Never did she really love any one; and now had she sacrificed her conviction of right and wrong to a man who neither knew how to appreciate her excellence, nor was adequate to excite other sensation than of terror and dread.

Thus were her thoughts engaged, when Nempere entered the apartment, accompanied by a gentleman, whom he unceremoniously announced as the Chevalier Mountfort, an Englishman of rank, and his friend. He was a man of handsome countenance and engaging manners. He conversed with Eloise with an ill-disguised conviction of his own superiority, and seemed indeed to assert, as it were, a right of conversing with her; nor did Nempere appear to dispute his apparent assumption. The conversation turned upon music; Mountfort asked Eloise her opinion; "Oh!" said Eloise, enthusiastically, "I think it sublimes the soul to heaven; I think it is, of all earthly pleasures, the most excessive. Who, when listening to harmoniously-arranged sounds of music, exists there, but must forget his woes, and lose the memory of every earthly existence in the ecstatic emotions which it excites? Do you not think so, Chevalier?" said she; for the liveliness of his manner enchanted Eloise, whose temper, naturally elastic and sprightly, had been damped as yet by misery and seclusion. Mountfort smiled at the energetic avowal of her

feelings; for, whilst she yet spoke, her expressive countenance became irradiated by the emanation of sentiment.

"Yes," said Mountfort, "it is indeed powerfully efficient to excite the interests of the soul; but does it not, by the very act of resuscitating the feelings, by working upon theperhaps, long dead chords of secret and enthusiastic rapture, awaken the powers of grief as well as pleasure?"

"Ah! it may do both," said Eloise, sighing.

He approached her at that instant. Nempere arose, as if intentionally, and left the room. Mountfort pressed her hand to his heart with earnestness: he kissed it, and then resigning it, said, "No, no, spotless untainted Eloise; untainted even by surrounding depravity: — not for worlds would I injure you. Oh! I can conceal it no longer — will conceal it no longer — Nempere is a villain."

"Is he?" said Eloise, apparently resigned, now, to the severest shocks of fortune: "then, then indeed I know not with whom to seek an asylum. Methinks all are villains."

"Listen then, injured innocence, and reflect in whom thou hast confided. Ten days ago, in the gaming-house at Geneva, Nempere was present. He engaged in play with me, and I won of him considerable sums. He told me that he could not pay me now, but that he had a beautiful girl whom he would give to me, if I would release him from the obligation. 'Est elle une fille de joye?' I inquired. 'Oui, et de vertu practicable.' This quieted my conscience. In a moment of licentiousness, I acceded to his proposal; and, as money is almost valueless to me, I tore the bond for three thousand zechins: but did I think that an angel was to be sacrificed to the degrading avarice of the being to whom her fate was committed? By heavens, I will this moment seek him, — upbraid him with his inhuman depravity, — and —" "Oh! stop, stop," cried Eloise, "do not seek him; all, all is well — I will leave him. Oh! how I thank you, stranger, for this unmerited pity to a wretch who is, alas! too conscious that she deserves it not."—"Ah! you deserve every thing," interrupted the impassioned Mountfort; "you deserve paradise. But leave this perjured villain; and do not say, unkind fair-one, that you have no friend; indeed you have a most warm, disinterested friend in me."—"Ah! but," said Eloise, hesitatingly, "what will the—"

"World say," she was about to have added; but the conviction of having so lately and so flagrantly violated every regard to its opinion — she only sighed. "Well," continued Mountfort, as if not perceiving her hesitation;

“you will accompany me to a cottage ornée which I possess at some little distance hence? Believe that your situation shall be treated with the deference which it requires; and, however I may have yielded to habitual licentiousness, I have too much honour to disturb the sorrows of one who is a victim to that of another.” Licentious and free as had been the career of Mountfort’s life, it was by no means the result of a nature naturally prone to vice; it had been owing to the unchecked sallies of an imagination not sufficiently refined. At the desolate situation of Eloise, however, every good propensity in his nature urged him to take compassion on her. His heart, originally susceptible of the finest feelings, was touched, and he really and sincerely — yes, a libertine, but not one from principle, sincerely meant what he said.

“Thanks, generous stranger,” said Eloise, with energy; “indeed I do thank you.” For not yet had acquaintance with the world sufficiently bidden Eloise distrust the motives of its disciples. “I accept your offer, and only hope that my compliance may not induce you to regard me otherwise than I am.”

“Never, never can I regard you as other than a suffering angel,” replied the impassioned Mountfort. Eloise blushed at what the energetic force of Mountfort’s manner assured her was not intended as a compliment.

“But may I ask my generous benefactor, how, where, and when am I to be released?”

“Leave that to me,” returned Mountfort: “be ready to-morrow night at ten o’clock. A chaise will wait beneath.”

Nempere soon entered; their conversation was uninterrupted, and the evening passed away uninteresting and slow.

Swiftly fled the intervening hours, and fast advanced the moment when Eloise was about to try, again, the compassion of the world. Night came, and Eloise entered the chaise; Mountfort leaped in after her. For a while her agitation was excessive. Mountfort at last succeeded in calming her; “Why, my dearest Ma’am’selle” said he, “why will you thus needlessly agitate yourself? I swear to hold your honour far dearer than my own life; and my companion—”

“What companion?” Eloise interrupted him, inquiringly.

“Why,” replied he, “a friend of mine, who lives in my cottage; he is an Irishman, and so very moral, and so averse to every species of gaieté de coeur, that you need be under no apprehensions. In short, he is a love-sick

swain, without ever having found what he calls a congenial female. He wanders about, writes poetry, and, in short, is much too sentimental to occasion you any alarm on that account. And, I assure you," added he, assuming a more serious tone, "although I may not be quite so far gone in romance, yet I have feelings of honour and humanity which teach me to respect your sorrows as my own."

"Indeed, indeed I believe you, generous stranger; nor do I think that you could have a friend whose principles are dishonourable."

Whilst yet she spoke, the chaise stopped, and Mountfort, springing from it, handed Eloise into his habitation. It was neatly fitted up in the English taste.

"Fitzeustace," said Mountfort to his friend, "allow me to introduce you to Madame Eloise de — ." Eloise blushed, as did Fitzeustace.

"Come," said Fitzeustace, to conquer mauvaise honte, "supper is ready, and the lady doubtlessly fatigued."

Fitzeustace was finely formed, yet there was a languor which pervaded even his whole figure; his eyes were dark and expressive, and as, occasionally, they met those of Eloise, gleamed with excessive brilliancy, awakened doubtlessly by curiosity and interest. He said but little during supper, and left to his more vivacious friend the whole of Eloise's conversation, who animated at having escaped a persecutor, and one she hated, displayed extreme command of social powers. Yes, once again was Eloise vivacious: the sweet spirit of social intercourse was not dead within, — that spirit which illumes even slavery, which makes its horrors less terrific, and is not annihilated in the dungeon itself.

At last arrived the hour of retiring — Morning came.

The cottage was situated in a beautiful valley. The odorous perfume of roses and jasmine wafted on the zephyr's wing, the flowery steep which rose before it, and the umbrageous loveliness of the surrounding country, rendered it a spot the most fitted for joyous seclusion. Eloise wandered out with Mountfort and his friend to view it; and so accommodating was her spirit, that, ere long, Fitzeustace became known to her as familiarly as if they had been acquainted all their lives.

Time fled on, and each day seemed only to succeed the other purposely to vary the pleasures of this delightful retreat. Eloise sung in the summer evenings, and Fitzeustace, whose taste for music was most exquisite, accompanied her on his oboe.

By degrees the society of Fitzeustace, to which before she had preferred Mountfort's, began to be more interesting. He insensibly acquired a power over the heart of Eloise, which she herself was not aware of. She involuntarily almost sought his society; and when, which frequently happened, Mountfort was absent at Geneva, her sensations were indescribably ecstatic in the society of his friend. She sat in mute, in silent rapture, listening to the notes of his oboe, as they floated on the stillness of evening: she feared not for the future, but, as it were, in a dream of rapturous delight, supposed that she must ever be as now — happy; not reflecting that, were he who caused that happiness absent, it would exist no longer.

Fitzeustace madly, passionately doted on Eloise: in all the energy of incontaminated nature, he sought but the happiness of the object of his whole affections. He sought not to investigate the causes of his woe; sufficient was it for him to have found one who could understand, could sympathize in, the feelings and sensations which every child of nature whom the world's refinements and luxury have not vitiated, must feel, — that affection, that contempt of selfish gratification, which every one whose soul towers at all above the multitude, must acknowledge. He destined Eloise, in his secret soul, for his own. He resolved to die — he wished to live with her; and would have purchased one instant's happiness for her with ages of hopeless torments to be inflicted on himself. He loved her with passionate and excessive tenderness: were he absent from her but a moment, he would sigh with love's impatience for her return; yet he feared to avow his flame, lest this, perhaps, baseless dream of rapturous and enthusiastic happiness might fade; — then, indeed Fitzeustace felt that he must die.

Yet was Fitzeustace mistaken: Eloise loved him with all the tenderness of innocence; she confided in him unreservedly; and, though unconscious of the nature of the love she felt for him, returned each enthusiastically energetic prepossession of his towering mind with ardour excessive and unrestrained. Yet did Fitzeustace suppose that she loved him not. Ah! why did he think so?

Late one evening, Mountfort had gone to Geneva, and Fitzeustace wandered with Eloise towards that spot which Eloise selected as their constant evening ramble on account of its superior beauty. The tall ash and oak, in mingled umbrage, sighed far above their heads; beneath them were

walks, artificially cut, yet imitating nature. They wandered on, till they came to a pavilion which Mountfort had caused to be erected. It was situated on a piece of land entirely surrounded by water, yet peninsulated by a rustic bridge which joined it to the walk.

Hither, urged mechanically, for their thoughts were otherwise employed, wandered Eloise and Fitzeustace. Before them hung the moon in cloudless majesty; her orb was reflected by every movement of the crystalline water, which, agitated by the gentle zephyr, rolled tranquilly. Heedless yet of the beauties of nature, the loveliness of the scene, they entered the pavilion.

Eloise convulsively pressed her hand on her forehead.

"What is the matter, my dearest Eloise?" inquired Fitzeustace, whom awakened tenderness had thrown off his guard.

"Oh! nothing, nothing; but a momentary faintness. It will soon go off; let us sit down."

They entered the pavilion.

"'Tis nothing but drowsiness," said Eloise, affecting gaiety; "'t will soon go off. I sate up late last night; that I believe was the occasion."

"Recline on this sofa, then," said Fitzeustace, reaching another pillow to make the couch easier; "and I will play some of those Irish tunes which you admire so much."

Eloise reclined on the sofa, and Fitzeustace, seated on the floor, began to play; the melancholy plaintiveness of his music touched Eloise; she sighed, and concealed her tears in her handkerchief. At length she sunk into a profound sleep: still Fitzeustace continued playing, noticing not that she slumbered. He now perceived that she spoke, but in so low a tone, that he knew she slept.

He approached. She lay wrapped in sleep; a sweet and celestial smile played upon her countenance, and irradiated her features with a tenfold expression of etheriality. Suddenly the visions of her slumbers appeared to have changed; the smile yet remained, but its expression was melancholy; tears stole gently from under her eyelids: — she sighed.

Ah! with what eagerness of ecstacy did Fitzeustace lean over her form! He dared not speak, he dared not move; but pressing a ringlet of hair which had escaped its band, to his lips, waited silently.

"Yes, yes; I think — it may—" at last she muttered; but so confusedly, as scarcely to be distinguishable.

Fitzeustace remained rooted in rapturous attention, listening.

“I thought, I thought he looked as if he could love me,” scarcely articulated the sleeping Eloise. “Perhaps, though he may not love me, he may allow me to love him. — Fitzeustace!”

On a sudden, again were changed the visions of her slumbers; terrified she started from sleep, and cried, “Fitzeustace!”

CHAPTER. XII.

For love is heaven, and heaven is love.

— Lay of the last Minstrel.

Needless were it to expatiate on their transports; they loved each other, and that is enough for those who have felt like Eloise and Fitzeustace.

One night, rather later indeed than it was Mountfort's custom to return from Geneva, Eloise and Fitzeustace sat awaiting his arrival. At last it was too late any longer even to expect him; and Eloise was about to bid Fitzeustace good-night, when a knock at the door aroused them. Instantly, with a hurried and disordered step, his clothes stained with blood, his countenance convulsed and pallid as death, in rushed Mountfort.

An involuntary exclamation of surprise burst from the terrified Eloise.

"What — what is the matter?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing!" answered Mountfort, in a tone of hurried, yet desperate agony. The wildness of his looks contradicted his assertions. Fitzeustace, who had been inquiring whether he was wounded, on finding that he was not, flew to Eloise.

"Oh! go, go!" she exclaimed. "Something, I am convinced, is wrong. — Tell me, dear Mountfort, what it is — in pity tell me."

"Nempere is dead!" replied Mountfort, in a voice of deliberate desperation; then, pausing for an instant, he added in an under tone, "And the officers of justice are in pursuit of me. Adieu, Eloise! — Adieu, Fitzeustace! You know I must part with you — you know how unwillingly. — My address is at — London. — Adieu — once again adieu!"

Saying this, as by a convulsive effort of despairing energy, he darted from the apartment, and mounting a horse which stood at the gate, swiftly sped away. Fitzeustace well knew the impossibility of his longer stay; he did not seem surprised, but sighed.

"Ah! well I know," said Eloise, violently agitated, "I well know myself to be the occasion of these misfortunes. Nempere sought for me; the generous Mountfort would not give me up, and now is he compelled to fly — perhaps may not even escape with life. Ah! I fear it is destined that every friend must suffer in the fatality which environs me. Fitzeustace!" she uttered this with such tenderness, that, almost involuntarily, he clasped her

hand, and pressed it to his bosom, in the silent, yet expressive enthusiasm of love. “Fitzeustace! you will not likewise desert the poor isolated Eloise?”

“Say not isolated, dearest love. Can, can you fear, my love, whilst your Fitzeustace exists? Say, adored Eloise, shall we now be united, never, never to part again? Say, will you consent to our immediate union?”

“Know you not,” exclaimed Eloise, in a low, faltering voice, “know you not that I have been another’s?

“Oh! suppose me not,” interrupted the impassioned Fitzeustace, “the slave of such vulgar and narrow-minded prejudice. Does the frightful vice and ingratitude of Nempere sully the spotless excellence of my Eloise’s soul? — No, no, — that must ever continue uncontaminated by the frailty of the body in which it is enshrined. It must rise superior to the earth: ‘t is that which I adore, Eloise. Say, say, was that Nempere’s?”

“Oh! no, never!” cried Eloise, with energy. “Nothing but fear was Nempere’s.”

“Then why say you that ever you were his?” said Fitzeustace, reproachfully. “You never could have been his, destined as you were for mine, from the first instant the particles composing the soul which I adore, were assimilated by the God whom I worship.”

“Indeed, believe me, dearest Fitzeustace, I love you, far beyond any thing existing — indeed, existence were valueless, unless enjoyed with you!”

Eloise, though a something prevented her from avowing them, felt the enthusiastic and sanguine ideas of Fitzeustace to be true: her soul, susceptible of the most exalted virtue and expansion, though cruelly nipped in its growth, thrilled with delight unexperienced before, when she found a being who could understand and perceive the truth of her feelings, and indeed anticipate them, as did Fitzeustace; and he, while gazing on the index of that soul, which associated with his, and animated the body of Eloise, but for him, felt delight, which, glowing and enthusiastic as had been his picture of happiness, he never expected to know. His dark and beautiful eye gleamed with tenfold luster; his every nerve, his every pulse, confessed the awakened consciousness, that she, on whom his soul had doted, ever since he acknowledged the existence of his intellectuality, was present before him.

A short space of time passed, and Eloise gave birth to the son of Nempere. Fitzeustace cherished it with the affection of a father, and, when

occasionally he necessarily must be absent from the apartment of his beloved Eloise, his whole delight was to gaze on the child, and trace in its innocent countenance the features of the mother who was so beloved by him.

Time no longer dragged heavily to Eloise and Fitzeustace: happy in the society of each other, they wished nor wanted other joys; united by the laws of their God, and assimilated by congeniality of sentiment, they supposed that each succeeding month must be like this, must pass like this in the full satiety of every innocent union of mental enjoyment. While thus the time sped in rapturous succession of delight, autumn advanced.

The evening was late, when, at the usual hour, Eloise and Fitzeustace took the way to their beloved pavilion. Fitzeustace was unusually desponding, and his ideas for futurity were marked by the melancholy of his mind. Eloise in vai, attempted to soothe him; the contention of his mind was but too visible. She led him to the pavilion. They entered it. The autumnal moon had risen; her dimly-gleaming orb, scarcely now visible, was shrouded in the duskiness of the atmosphere: like a spirit of the spotless ether, which shrinks from the obtrusive gaze of man, she hung behind a leaden-coloured cloud. The wind in low and melancholy whispering sighed among the branches of the towering trees; the melody of the nightingale, which floated upon its dying cadences, alone broke on the solemnity of the scene. Lives there, whose soul experiences no degree of delight, is susceptible of no gradations of feelings, at change of scenery? Lives there, who can listen to the cadence of the evenign zephyr, and not acknowledge, in his mind, the sensations of celestial melancholy which it awakens? for if he does, his life were valueless, his death were undeplored. Ambition, avarice, ten thousand mean, ignoble passions, had extinguished within him that soft, but indefinable sensorium of unallayed delight, with which his soul, whose susceptibility is not destroyed by the demands of selfish appetite, thrills exultingly, and wants but the union of another, of whom the feelings are in unison with his own, to constitute almost insupportable delight.

Let Epicureans argue, and say, “There is no pleasure but in the gratification of the senses.” Let them enjoy their own opinion; I want not pleasure, when I can enjoy happiness. Let Stoics say, “Every idea that there are fine feelings, is weak; he who yields to them is even weaker.” Let those too, wise in their own conceit, indulge themselves in sordid and degrading

hypotheses; let them suppose human nature capable of no influence from anything but materiality; so long as I enjoy the innocent and congenial delight, which it were needless to define to those who are strangers to it, I am satisfied.

“Dear Fitzeustace,” said Eloise, “tell me what afflicts you; why are you so melancholy? — Do not we mutually love, and have we not the unrestrained enjoyment of each other’s society?”

Fitzeustace sighed deeply; he pressed Eloise’s hand. “Why does my dearest Eloise suppose that I am unhappy?” The tone of his voice was tremulous, and a deadly settled paleness dwelt on his cheek.

“Are you not unhappy, then, Fitzeustace?”

“I know I ought not to be so,” he replied, with a faint smile; — he paused—”Eloise,” continued Fitzeustace, “I know I ought not to grieve, but you will, perhaps, pardon me when I say, that a father’s curse, whether from the prejudice of education, or the innate consciousness of its horror, agitates my mind. I cannot leave you, I cannot go to England; and will you then leave your country, Eloise, to accommodate me? No, I do not, I ought not to expect it.”

“Oh! with pleasure; what is country? what is every thing without you? Come, my love, dismiss these fears, we yet may be happy.”

“But before we go to England, before my father will see us, it is necessary that we should be married — nay, do not start, Eloise; I view it in the light that you do; I consider it an human institution, and incapable of furnishing that bond of union by which alone can intellect be conjoined; I regard it as but a chain, which, although it keeps the body bound, still leaves the soul unfettered: it is not so with love. But still, Eloise, to those who think like us, it is at all events harmless; ‘t is but yielding to the prejudices of the world wherein we live, and procuring moral expediency, at a slight sacrifice of what we conceive to be right.

“Well, well, it shall be done, Fitzeustace,” resumed Eloise; “but take the assurance of my promise that I cannot love you more.”

They soon agreed on a point of, in their eyes, so trifling importance, and arriving in England, tasted that happiness, which love and innocence alone can give. Prejudice may triumph for a while, but virtue will be eventually the conqueror.

CONCLUSION.

It was night — all was still; not a breeze dared to move, not a sound to break the stillness of horror. Wolfstein has arrived at the village near which St. Irvyne stood; he has sped him to the château, and has entered the edifice; the garden door was open, and he entered the vaults.

For a time, the novelty of his situation, and the painful recurrence of past events, which, independently of his own energies, would gleam upon his soul, rendered him too much confused to investigate minutely the recesses of the cavern. Arousing himself, at last, however, from this momentary suspension of faculty, he paced the vaults in eager desire for the arrival of midnight. How inexpressible was his horror when he fell on a body which appeared motionless and without life! He raised it in his arms, and, taking it to the light, beheld, pallid in death, the features of Megalena. The laugh of anguish which had convulsed her expiring frame, still played around her mouth, as a smile of horror and despair; her hair was loose and wild, seemingly gathered in knots by the convulsive grasp of dissolution. She moved not; his soul was nerved by almost superhuman powers; yet the ice of despair chilled his burning brain. Curiosity, resistless curiosity, even in a moment such as this, reigned in his bosom. The body of Megalena was breathless, and yet no visible cause could be assigned for her death. Wolfstein dashed the body convulsively on the earth, and, wildered by the suscitated energies of his soul almost to madness, rushed into the vaults.

Not yet had the bell announced the hour of midnight. Wolfstein sate on a projecting mass of stone; his frame trembled with a burning anticipation of what was about to occur; a thirst of knowledge scorched his soul to madness; yet he stilled his wild energies, — yet he awaited in silence the coming of Ginotti. At last the bell struck; Ginotti came; his step was rapid, and his manner wild; his figure was wasted almost to a skeleton, yet it retained its loftiness and grandeur; still from his eye emanated that indefinable expression which ever made Wolfstein shrink appalled. His cheek was sunken and hollow, yet was it flushed by the hectic of despairing exertion. “Wolfstein,” he said, “Wolfstein, part is past — the hour of agonizing horror is past; yet the dark and icy gloom of desperation braces this soul to fortitude; — but come, let us to business.” He spoke, and threw his mantle on the ground. “I am blasted to endless torment,” muttered the

mysterious. “Wolfstein, dost thou deny thy Creator?”—”Never, never.”—”Wilt thou not?”—”No, no, — any thing but that.”

Deeper grew the gloom of the cavern. Darkness almost visible seemed to press around them; yet did the scintillations which flashed from Ginotti’s burning gaze, dance on its bosom. Suddenly a flash of lightning hissed through the lengthened vaults: a burst of frightful thunder seemed to convulse the universal fabric of nature; and, borne on the pinions of hell’s sulphurous whirlwind, he himself, the frightful prince of terror, stood before them. “Yes,” howled a voice superior to the bursting thunderpeal; “yes, thou shalt have eternal life, Ginotti.” On a sudden Ginotti’s frame mouldered to a gigantic skeleton, yet two pale and ghastly flames glared in his eyeless sockets. Blackened in terrible convulsions, Wolfstein expired; over him had the power of hell no influence. Yes, endless existence is thine, Ginotti — a dateless and hopeless eternity of horror.

Ginotti is Nempere. Eloise is the sister of Wolfstein. Let then the memory of these victims to hell and malice live in the remembrance of those who can pity the wanderings of error; let remorse and repentance expiate the offences which arise from the delusion of the passions, and let endless life be sought from Him who alone can give an eternity of happiness.

THE END

FRANKENSTEIN by Mary Shelley

OR

THE MODERN PROMETHEUS

Mary Shelley started writing this novel when she was eighteen and the novel was eventually finished and published three years later. The first edition was published anonymously in London in 1818. Mary Shelley had previously explored the region in which the story takes place, and the topics of galvanism and other similar occult ideas were themes of conversation among her companions, particularly her future husband Percy Bysshe Shelley. When Mary was talking with fellow writers Percy, Lord Byron and John Polidori, they decided they would have a competition to see who could write the best horror story. After pondering for weeks about what her possible storyline could be, Mary had a dream about a scientist that created life and was horrified by what he had made. This dream provided the inspiration for *Frankenstein*, which would become one of the most influential works of gothic horror ever created.

It is believed by some scholars that Percy had a significant hand in the writing of the novel, which is why the text appears in this edition of Shelley's works.

Mary Shelley

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Letter 1

St. Petersburgh, Dec. 11th, 17—

TO Mrs. Saville, England

You will rejoice to hear that no disaster has accompanied the commencement of an enterprise which you have regarded with such evil forebodings. I arrived here yesterday, and my first task is to assure my dear sister of my welfare and increasing confidence in the success of my undertaking.

I am already far north of London, and as I walk in the streets of Petersburgh, I feel a cold northern breeze play upon my cheeks, which braces my nerves and fills me with delight. Do you understand this feeling? This breeze, which has travelled from the regions towards which I am advancing, gives me a foretaste of those icy climes. Inspirited by this wind of promise, my daydreams become more fervent and vivid. I try in vain to be persuaded that the pole is the seat of frost and desolation; it ever presents itself to my imagination as the region of beauty and delight. There, Margaret, the sun is forever visible, its broad disk just skirting the horizon and diffusing a perpetual splendour. There—for with your leave, my sister, I will put some trust in preceding navigators—there snow and frost are banished; and, sailing over a calm sea, we may be wafted to a land surpassing in wonders and in beauty every region hitherto discovered on the habitable globe. Its productions and features may be without example, as the phenomena of the heavenly bodies undoubtedly are in those undiscovered solitudes. What may not be expected in a country of eternal light? I may there discover the wondrous power which attracts the needle and may regulate a thousand celestial observations that require only this voyage to render their seeming eccentricities consistent forever. I shall satiate my ardent curiosity with the sight of a part of the world never before visited, and may tread a land never before imprinted by the foot of man. These are my enticements, and they are sufficient to conquer all fear of danger or death and to induce me to commence this laborious voyage with the joy a child feels when he embarks in a little boat, with his holiday mates, on an expedition of discovery up his native river. But supposing all these conjectures to be false, you cannot contest the inestimable benefit

which I shall confer on all mankind, to the last generation, by discovering a passage near the pole to those countries, to reach which at present so many months are requisite; or by ascertaining the secret of the magnet, which, if at all possible, can only be effected by an undertaking such as mine.

These reflections have dispelled the agitation with which I began my letter, and I feel my heart glow with an enthusiasm which elevates me to heaven, for nothing contributes so much to tranquillize the mind as a steady purpose—a point on which the soul may fix its intellectual eye. This expedition has been the favourite dream of my early years. I have read with ardour the accounts of the various voyages which have been made in the prospect of arriving at the North Pacific Ocean through the seas which surround the pole. You may remember that a history of all the voyages made for purposes of discovery composed the whole of our good Uncle Thomas' library. My education was neglected, yet I was passionately fond of reading. These volumes were my study day and night, and my familiarity with them increased that regret which I had felt, as a child, on learning that my father's dying injunction had forbidden my uncle to allow me to embark in a seafaring life.

These visions faded when I perused, for the first time, those poets whose effusions entranced my soul and lifted it to heaven. I also became a poet and for one year lived in a paradise of my own creation; I imagined that I also might obtain a niche in the temple where the names of Homer and Shakespeare are consecrated. You are well acquainted with my failure and how heavily I bore the disappointment. But just at that time I inherited the fortune of my cousin, and my thoughts were turned into the channel of their earlier bent.

Six years have passed since I resolved on my present undertaking. I can, even now, remember the hour from which I dedicated myself to this great enterprise. I commenced by inuring my body to hardship. I accompanied the whale-fishers on several expeditions to the North Sea; I voluntarily endured cold, famine, thirst, and want of sleep; I often worked harder than the common sailors during the day and devoted my nights to the study of mathematics, the theory of medicine, and those branches of physical science from which a naval adventurer might derive the greatest practical advantage. Twice I actually hired myself as an under-mate in a Greenland whaler, and acquitted myself to admiration. I must own I felt a little proud when my captain offered me the second dignity in the vessel and entreated

me to remain with the greatest earnestness, so valuable did he consider my services. And now, dear Margaret, do I not deserve to accomplish some great purpose? My life might have been passed in ease and luxury, but I preferred glory to every enticement that wealth placed in my path. Oh, that some encouraging voice would answer in the affirmative! My courage and my resolution is firm; but my hopes fluctuate, and my spirits are often depressed. I am about to proceed on a long and difficult voyage, the emergencies of which will demand all my fortitude: I am required not only to raise the spirits of others, but sometimes to sustain my own, when theirs are failing.

This is the most favourable period for travelling in Russia. They fly quickly over the snow in their sledges; the motion is pleasant, and, in my opinion, far more agreeable than that of an English stagecoach. The cold is not excessive, if you are wrapped in furs—a dress which I have already adopted, for there is a great difference between walking the deck and remaining seated motionless for hours, when no exercise prevents the blood from actually freezing in your veins. I have no ambition to lose my life on the post-road between St. Petersburgh and Archangel. I shall depart for the latter town in a fortnight or three weeks; and my intention is to hire a ship there, which can easily be done by paying the insurance for the owner, and to engage as many sailors as I think necessary among those who are accustomed to the whale-fishing. I do not intend to sail until the month of June; and when shall I return? Ah, dear sister, how can I answer this question? If I succeed, many, many months, perhaps years, will pass before you and I may meet. If I fail, you will see me again soon, or never. Farewell, my dear, excellent Margaret. Heaven shower down blessings on you, and save me, that I may again and again testify my gratitude for all your love and kindness.

Your affectionate brother, R. Walton

Letter 2

Archangel, 28th March, 17—

To Mrs. Saville, England

How slowly the time passes here, encompassed as I am by frost and snow! Yet a second step is taken towards my enterprise. I have hired a vessel and am occupied in collecting my sailors; those whom I have already engaged appear to be men on whom I can depend and are certainly possessed of dauntless courage.

But I have one want which I have never yet been able to satisfy, and the absence of the object of which I now feel as a most severe evil, I have no friend, Margaret: when I am glowing with the enthusiasm of success, there will be none to participate my joy; if I am assailed by disappointment, no one will endeavour to sustain me in dejection. I shall commit my thoughts to paper, it is true; but that is a poor medium for the communication of feeling. I desire the company of a man who could sympathize with me, whose eyes would reply to mine. You may deem me romantic, my dear sister, but I bitterly feel the want of a friend. I have no one near me, gentle yet courageous, possessed of a cultivated as well as of a capacious mind, whose tastes are like my own, to approve or amend my plans. How would such a friend repair the faults of your poor brother! I am too ardent in execution and too impatient of difficulties. But it is a still greater evil to me that I am self-educated: for the first fourteen years of my life I ran wild on a common and read nothing but our Uncle Thomas' books of voyages. At that age I became acquainted with the celebrated poets of our own country; but it was only when it had ceased to be in my power to derive its most important benefits from such a conviction that I perceived the necessity of becoming acquainted with more languages than that of my native country. Now I am twenty-eight and am in reality more illiterate than many schoolboys of fifteen. It is true that I have thought more and that my daydreams are more extended and magnificent, but they want (as the painters call it) KEEPING; and I greatly need a friend who would have sense enough not to despise me as romantic, and affection enough for me to endeavour to regulate my mind. Well, these are useless complaints; I shall

certainly find no friend on the wide ocean, nor even here in Archangel, among merchants and seamen. Yet some feelings, unallied to the dross of human nature, beat even in these rugged bosoms. My lieutenant, for instance, is a man of wonderful courage and enterprise; he is madly desirous of glory, or rather, to word my phrase more characteristically, of advancement in his profession. He is an Englishman, and in the midst of national and professional prejudices, unsoftened by cultivation, retains some of the noblest endowments of humanity. I first became acquainted with him on board a whale vessel; finding that he was unemployed in this city, I easily engaged him to assist in my enterprise. The master is a person of an excellent disposition and is remarkable in the ship for his gentleness and the mildness of his discipline. This circumstance, added to his well-known integrity and dauntless courage, made me very desirous to engage him. A youth passed in solitude, my best years spent under your gentle and feminine fosterage, has so refined the groundwork of my character that I cannot overcome an intense distaste to the usual brutality exercised on board ship: I have never believed it to be necessary, and when I heard of a mariner equally noted for his kindliness of heart and the respect and obedience paid to him by his crew, I felt myself peculiarly fortunate in being able to secure his services. I heard of him first in rather a romantic manner, from a lady who owes to him the happiness of her life. This, briefly, is his story. Some years ago he loved a young Russian lady of moderate fortune, and having amassed a considerable sum in prize-money, the father of the girl consented to the match. He saw his mistress once before the destined ceremony; but she was bathed in tears, and throwing herself at his feet, entreated him to spare her, confessing at the same time that she loved another, but that he was poor, and that her father would never consent to the union. My generous friend reassured the suppliant, and on being informed of the name of her lover, instantly abandoned his pursuit. He had already bought a farm with his money, on which he had designed to pass the remainder of his life; but he bestowed the whole on his rival, together with the remains of his prize-money to purchase stock, and then himself solicited the young woman's father to consent to her marriage with her lover. But the old man decidedly refused, thinking himself bound in honour to my friend, who, when he found the father inexorable, quitted his country, nor returned until he heard that his former mistress was married according to her inclinations. "What a noble fellow!" you will exclaim. He

is so; but then he is wholly uneducated: he is as silent as a Turk, and a kind of ignorant carelessness attends him, which, while it renders his conduct the more astonishing, detracts from the interest and sympathy which otherwise he would command.

Yet do not suppose, because I complain a little or because I can conceive a consolation for my toils which I may never know, that I am wavering in my resolutions. Those are as fixed as fate, and my voyage is only now delayed until the weather shall permit my embarkation. The winter has been dreadfully severe, but the spring promises well, and it is considered as a remarkably early season, so that perhaps I may sail sooner than I expected. I shall do nothing rashly: you know me sufficiently to confide in my prudence and considerateness whenever the safety of others is committed to my care.

I cannot describe to you my sensations on the near prospect of my undertaking. It is impossible to communicate to you a conception of the trembling sensation, half pleasurable and half fearful, with which I am preparing to depart. I am going to unexplored regions, to "the land of mist and snow," but I shall kill no albatross; therefore do not be alarmed for my safety or if I should come back to you as worn and woeful as the "Ancient Mariner." You will smile at my allusion, but I will disclose a secret. I have often attributed my attachment to, my passionate enthusiasm for, the dangerous mysteries of ocean to that production of the most imaginative of modern poets. There is something at work in my soul which I do not understand. I am practically industrious—painstaking, a workman to execute with perseverance and labour—but besides this there is a love for the marvellous, a belief in the marvellous, intertwined in all my projects, which hurries me out of the common pathways of men, even to the wild sea and unvisited regions I am about to explore. But to return to dearer considerations. Shall I meet you again, after having traversed immense seas, and returned by the most southern cape of Africa or America? I dare not expect such success, yet I cannot bear to look on the reverse of the picture. Continue for the present to write to me by every opportunity: I may receive your letters on some occasions when I need them most to support my spirits. I love you very tenderly. Remember me with affection, should you never hear from me again.

Your affectionate brother, Robert Walton

Letter 3

July 7th, 17—

To Mrs. Saville, England

My dear Sister,

I write a few lines in haste to say that I am safe—and well advanced on my voyage. This letter will reach England by a merchantman now on its homeward voyage from Archangel; more fortunate than I, who may not see my native land, perhaps, for many years. I am, however, in good spirits: my men are bold and apparently firm of purpose, nor do the floating sheets of ice that continually pass us, indicating the dangers of the region towards which we are advancing, appear to dismay them. We have already reached a very high latitude; but it is the height of summer, and although not so warm as in England, the southern gales, which blow us speedily towards those shores which I so ardently desire to attain, breathe a degree of renovating warmth which I had not expected.

No incidents have hitherto befallen us that would make a figure in a letter. One or two stiff gales and the springing of a leak are accidents which experienced navigators scarcely remember to record, and I shall be well content if nothing worse happen to us during our voyage.

Adieu, my dear Margaret. Be assured that for my own sake, as well as yours, I will not rashly encounter danger. I will be cool, persevering, and prudent.

But success SHALL crown my endeavours. Wherefore not? Thus far I have gone, tracing a secure way over the pathless seas, the very stars themselves being witnesses and testimonies of my triumph. Why not still proceed over the untamed yet obedient element? What can stop the determined heart and resolved will of man?

My swelling heart involuntarily pours itself out thus. But I must finish. Heaven bless my beloved sister!

R.W.

Letter 4

August 5th, 17—

To Mrs. Saville, England

So strange an accident has happened to us that I cannot forbear recording it, although it is very probable that you will see me before these papers can come into your possession.

Last Monday (July 31st) we were nearly surrounded by ice, which closed in the ship on all sides, scarcely leaving her the sea-room in which she floated. Our situation was somewhat dangerous, especially as we were compassed round by a very thick fog. We accordingly lay to, hoping that some change would take place in the atmosphere and weather.

About two o'clock the mist cleared away, and we beheld, stretched out in every direction, vast and irregular plains of ice, which seemed to have no end. Some of my comrades groaned, and my own mind began to grow watchful with anxious thoughts, when a strange sight suddenly attracted our attention and diverted our solicitude from our own situation. We perceived a low carriage, fixed on a sledge and drawn by dogs, pass on towards the north, at the distance of half a mile; a being which had the shape of a man, but apparently of gigantic stature, sat in the sledge and guided the dogs. We watched the rapid progress of the traveller with our telescopes until he was lost among the distant inequalities of the ice. This appearance excited our unqualified wonder. We were, as we believed, many hundred miles from any land; but this apparition seemed to denote that it was not, in reality, so distant as we had supposed. Shut in, however, by ice, it was impossible to follow his track, which we had observed with the greatest attention. About two hours after this occurrence we heard the ground sea, and before night the ice broke and freed our ship. We, however, lay to until the morning, fearing to encounter in the dark those large loose masses which float about after the breaking up of the ice. I profited of this time to rest for a few hours.

In the morning, however, as soon as it was light, I went upon deck and found all the sailors busy on one side of the vessel, apparently talking to someone in the sea. It was, in fact, a sledge, like that we had seen before,

which had drifted towards us in the night on a large fragment of ice. Only one dog remained alive; but there was a human being within it whom the sailors were persuading to enter the vessel. He was not, as the other traveller seemed to be, a savage inhabitant of some undiscovered island, but a European. When I appeared on deck the master said, “Here is our captain, and he will not allow you to perish on the open sea.”

On perceiving me, the stranger addressed me in English, although with a foreign accent. “Before I come on board your vessel,” said he, “will you have the kindness to inform me whither you are bound?”

You may conceive my astonishment on hearing such a question addressed to me from a man on the brink of destruction and to whom I should have supposed that my vessel would have been a resource which he would not have exchanged for the most precious wealth the earth can afford. I replied, however, that we were on a voyage of discovery towards the northern pole.

Upon hearing this he appeared satisfied and consented to come on board. Good God! Margaret, if you had seen the man who thus capitulated for his safety, your surprise would have been boundless. His limbs were nearly frozen, and his body dreadfully emaciated by fatigue and suffering. I never saw a man in so wretched a condition. We attempted to carry him into the cabin, but as soon as he had quitted the fresh air he fainted. We accordingly brought him back to the deck and restored him to animation by rubbing him with brandy and forcing him to swallow a small quantity. As soon as he showed signs of life we wrapped him up in blankets and placed him near the chimney of the kitchen stove. By slow degrees he recovered and ate a little soup, which restored him wonderfully.

Two days passed in this manner before he was able to speak, and I often feared that his sufferings had deprived him of understanding. When he had in some measure recovered, I removed him to my own cabin and attended on him as much as my duty would permit. I never saw a more interesting creature: his eyes have generally an expression of wildness, and even madness, but there are moments when, if anyone performs an act of kindness towards him or does him any the most trifling service, his whole countenance is lighted up, as it were, with a beam of benevolence and sweetness that I never saw equalled. But he is generally melancholy and despairing, and sometimes he gnashes his teeth, as if impatient of the weight of woes that oppresses him.

When my guest was a little recovered I had great trouble to keep off the men, who wished to ask him a thousand questions; but I would not allow him to be tormented by their idle curiosity, in a state of body and mind whose restoration evidently depended upon entire repose. Once, however, the lieutenant asked why he had come so far upon the ice in so strange a vehicle.

His countenance instantly assumed an aspect of the deepest gloom, and he replied, "To seek one who fled from me."

"And did the man whom you pursued travel in the same fashion?"

"Yes."

"Then I fancy we have seen him, for the day before we picked you up we saw some dogs drawing a sledge, with a man in it, across the ice."

This aroused the stranger's attention, and he asked a multitude of questions concerning the route which the demon, as he called him, had pursued. Soon after, when he was alone with me, he said, "I have, doubtless, excited your curiosity, as well as that of these good people; but you are too considerate to make inquiries."

"Certainly; it would indeed be very impertinent and inhuman in me to trouble you with any inquisitiveness of mine."

"And yet you rescued me from a strange and perilous situation; you have benevolently restored me to life."

Soon after this he inquired if I thought that the breaking up of the ice had destroyed the other sledge. I replied that I could not answer with any degree of certainty, for the ice had not broken until near midnight, and the traveller might have arrived at a place of safety before that time; but of this I could not judge. From this time a new spirit of life animated the decaying frame of the stranger. He manifested the greatest eagerness to be upon deck to watch for the sledge which had before appeared; but I have persuaded him to remain in the cabin, for he is far too weak to sustain the rawness of the atmosphere. I have promised that someone should watch for him and give him instant notice if any new object should appear in sight.

Such is my journal of what relates to this strange occurrence up to the present day. The stranger has gradually improved in health but is very silent and appears uneasy when anyone except myself enters his cabin. Yet his manners are so conciliating and gentle that the sailors are all interested in him, although they have had very little communication with him. For my own part, I begin to love him as a brother, and his constant and deep grief

fills me with sympathy and compassion. He must have been a noble creature in his better days, being even now in wreck so attractive and amiable. I said in one of my letters, my dear Margaret, that I should find no friend on the wide ocean; yet I have found a man who, before his spirit had been broken by misery, I should have been happy to have possessed as the brother of my heart.

I shall continue my journal concerning the stranger at intervals, should I have any fresh incidents to record.

August 13th, 17—

My affection for my guest increases every day. He excites at once my admiration and my pity to an astonishing degree. How can I see so noble a creature destroyed by misery without feeling the most poignant grief? He is so gentle, yet so wise; his mind is so cultivated, and when he speaks, although his words are culled with the choicest art, yet they flow with rapidity and unparalleled eloquence. He is now much recovered from his illness and is continually on the deck, apparently watching for the sledge that preceded his own. Yet, although unhappy, he is not so utterly occupied by his own misery but that he interests himself deeply in the projects of others. He has frequently conversed with me on mine, which I have communicated to him without disguise. He entered attentively into all my arguments in favour of my eventual success and into every minute detail of the measures I had taken to secure it. I was easily led by the sympathy which he evinced to use the language of my heart, to give utterance to the burning ardour of my soul and to say, with all the fervour that warmed me, how gladly I would sacrifice my fortune, my existence, my every hope, to the furtherance of my enterprise. One man's life or death were but a small price to pay for the acquirement of the knowledge which I sought, for the dominion I should acquire and transmit over the elemental foes of our race. As I spoke, a dark gloom spread over my listener's countenance. At first I perceived that he tried to suppress his emotion; he placed his hands before his eyes, and my voice quivered and failed me as I beheld tears trickle fast from between his fingers; a groan burst from his heaving breast. I paused; at length he spoke, in broken accents: "Unhappy man! Do you share my madness? Have you drunk also of the intoxicating draught? Hear me; let me reveal my tale, and you will dash the cup from your lips!"

Such words, you may imagine, strongly excited my curiosity; but the paroxysm of grief that had seized the stranger overcame his weakened powers, and many hours of repose and tranquil conversation were necessary to restore his composure. Having conquered the violence of his feelings, he appeared to despise himself for being the slave of passion; and quelling the dark tyranny of despair, he led me again to converse concerning myself personally. He asked me the history of my earlier years. The tale was quickly told, but it awakened various trains of reflection. I spoke of my desire of finding a friend, of my thirst for a more intimate sympathy with a fellow mind than had ever fallen to my lot, and expressed my conviction that a man could boast of little happiness who did not enjoy this blessing. "I agree with you," replied the stranger; "we are unfashioned creatures, but half made up, if one wiser, better, dearer than ourselves—such a friend ought to be—do not lend his aid to perfectionate our weak and faulty natures. I once had a friend, the most noble of human creatures, and am entitled, therefore, to judge respecting friendship. You have hope, and the world before you, and have no cause for despair. But I—I have lost everything and cannot begin life anew."

As he said this his countenance became expressive of a calm, settled grief that touched me to the heart. But he was silent and presently retired to his cabin.

Even broken in spirit as he is, no one can feel more deeply than he does the beauties of nature. The starry sky, the sea, and every sight afforded by these wonderful regions seem still to have the power of elevating his soul from earth. Such a man has a double existence: he may suffer misery and be overwhelmed by disappointments, yet when he has retired into himself, he will be like a celestial spirit that has a halo around him, within whose circle no grief or folly ventures.

Will you smile at the enthusiasm I express concerning this divine wanderer? You would not if you saw him. You have been tutored and refined by books and retirement from the world, and you are therefore somewhat fastidious; but this only renders you the more fit to appreciate the extraordinary merits of this wonderful man. Sometimes I have endeavoured to discover what quality it is which he possesses that elevates him so immeasurably above any other person I ever knew. I believe it to be an intuitive discernment, a quick but never-failing power of judgment, a penetration into the causes of things, unequalled for clearness and precision;

add to this a facility of expression and a voice whose varied intonations are soul-subduing music.

August 19, 17—

Yesterday the stranger said to me, “You may easily perceive, Captain Walton, that I have suffered great and unparalleled misfortunes. I had determined at one time that the memory of these evils should die with me, but you have won me to alter my determination. You seek for knowledge and wisdom, as I once did; and I ardently hope that the gratification of your wishes may not be a serpent to sting you, as mine has been. I do not know that the relation of my disasters will be useful to you; yet, when I reflect that you are pursuing the same course, exposing yourself to the same dangers which have rendered me what I am, I imagine that you may deduce an apt moral from my tale, one that may direct you if you succeed in your undertaking and console you in case of failure. Prepare to hear of occurrences which are usually deemed marvellous. Were we among the tamer scenes of nature I might fear to encounter your unbelief, perhaps your ridicule; but many things will appear possible in these wild and mysterious regions which would provoke the laughter of those unacquainted with the ever-varied powers of nature; nor can I doubt but that my tale conveys in its series internal evidence of the truth of the events of which it is composed.”

You may easily imagine that I was much gratified by the offered communication, yet I could not endure that he should renew his grief by a recital of his misfortunes. I felt the greatest eagerness to hear the promised narrative, partly from curiosity and partly from a strong desire to ameliorate his fate if it were in my power. I expressed these feelings in my answer.

“I thank you,” he replied, “for your sympathy, but it is useless; my fate is nearly fulfilled. I wait but for one event, and then I shall repose in peace. I understand your feeling,” continued he, perceiving that I wished to interrupt him; “but you are mistaken, my friend, if thus you will allow me to name you; nothing can alter my destiny; listen to my history, and you will perceive how irrevocably it is determined.”

He then told me that he would commence his narrative the next day when I should be at leisure. This promise drew from me the warmest thanks. I have resolved every night, when I am not imperatively occupied by my duties, to record, as nearly as possible in his own words, what he has related during the day. If I should be engaged, I will at least make notes.

This manuscript will doubtless afford you the greatest pleasure; but to me, who know him, and who hear it from his own lips—with what interest and sympathy shall I read it in some future day! Even now, as I commence my task, his full-toned voice swells in my ears; his lustrous eyes dwell on me with all their melancholy sweetness; I see his thin hand raised in animation, while the lineaments of his face are irradiated by the soul within.

Strange and harrowing must be his story, frightful the storm which embraced the gallant vessel on its course and wrecked it—thus!

Chapter 1

I am by birth a Genevese, and my family is one of the most distinguished of that republic. My ancestors had been for many years counsellors and syndics, and my father had filled several public situations with honour and reputation. He was respected by all who knew him for his integrity and indefatigable attention to public business. He passed his younger days perpetually occupied by the affairs of his country; a variety of circumstances had prevented his marrying early, nor was it until the decline of life that he became a husband and the father of a family.

As the circumstances of his marriage illustrate his character, I cannot refrain from relating them. One of his most intimate friends was a merchant who, from a flourishing state, fell, through numerous mischances, into poverty. This man, whose name was Beaufort, was of a proud and unbending disposition and could not bear to live in poverty and oblivion in the same country where he had formerly been distinguished for his rank and magnificence. Having paid his debts, therefore, in the most honourable manner, he retreated with his daughter to the town of Lucerne, where he lived unknown and in wretchedness. My father loved Beaufort with the truest friendship and was deeply grieved by his retreat in these unfortunate circumstances. He bitterly deplored the false pride which led his friend to a conduct so little worthy of the affection that united them. He lost no time in endeavouring to seek him out, with the hope of persuading him to begin the world again through his credit and assistance. Beaufort had taken effectual measures to conceal himself, and it was ten months before my father discovered his abode. Overjoyed at this discovery, he hastened to the house, which was situated in a mean street near the Reuss. But when he entered, misery and despair alone welcomed him. Beaufort had saved but a very small sum of money from the wreck of his fortunes, but it was sufficient to provide him with sustenance for some months, and in the meantime he hoped to procure some respectable employment in a merchant’s house. The interval was, consequently, spent in inaction; his grief only became more deep and rankling when he had leisure for reflection, and at length it took so fast hold of his mind that at the end of three months he lay on a bed of sickness, incapable of any exertion.

His daughter attended him with the greatest tenderness, but she saw with despair that their little fund was rapidly decreasing and that there was no other prospect of support. But Caroline Beaufort possessed a mind of an uncommon mould, and her courage rose to support her in her adversity. She procured plain work; she plaited straw and by various means contrived to earn a pittance scarcely sufficient to support life.

Several months passed in this manner. Her father grew worse; her time was more entirely occupied in attending him; her means of subsistence decreased; and in the tenth month her father died in her arms, leaving her an orphan and a beggar. This last blow overcame her, and she knelt by Beaufort's coffin weeping bitterly, when my father entered the chamber. He came like a protecting spirit to the poor girl, who committed herself to his care; and after the interment of his friend he conducted her to Geneva and placed her under the protection of a relation. Two years after this event Caroline became his wife.

There was a considerable difference between the ages of my parents, but this circumstance seemed to unite them only closer in bonds of devoted affection. There was a sense of justice in my father's upright mind which rendered it necessary that he should approve highly to love strongly. Perhaps during former years he had suffered from the late-discovered unworthiness of one beloved and so was disposed to set a greater value on tried worth. There was a show of gratitude and worship in his attachment to my mother, differing wholly from the doting fondness of age, for it was inspired by reverence for her virtues and a desire to be the means of, in some degree, recompensing her for the sorrows she had endured, but which gave inexpressible grace to his behaviour to her. Everything was made to yield to her wishes and her convenience. He strove to shelter her, as a fair exotic is sheltered by the gardener, from every rougher wind and to surround her with all that could tend to excite pleasurable emotion in her soft and benevolent mind. Her health, and even the tranquillity of her hitherto constant spirit, had been shaken by what she had gone through. During the two years that had elapsed previous to their marriage my father had gradually relinquished all his public functions; and immediately after their union they sought the pleasant climate of Italy, and the change of scene and interest attendant on a tour through that land of wonders, as a restorative for her weakened frame.

From Italy they visited Germany and France. I, their eldest child, was born at Naples, and as an infant accompanied them in their rambles. I remained for several years their only child. Much as they were attached to each other, they seemed to draw inexhaustible stores of affection from a very mine of love to bestow them upon me. My mother's tender caresses and my father's smile of benevolent pleasure while regarding me are my first recollections. I was their plaything and their idol, and something better —their child, the innocent and helpless creature bestowed on them by heaven, whom to bring up to good, and whose future lot it was in their hands to direct to happiness or misery, according as they fulfilled their duties towards me. With this deep consciousness of what they owed towards the being to which they had given life, added to the active spirit of tenderness that animated both, it may be imagined that while during every hour of my infant life I received a lesson of patience, of charity, and of self-control, I was so guided by a silken cord that all seemed but one train of enjoyment to me. For a long time I was their only care. My mother had much desired to have a daughter, but I continued their single offspring. When I was about five years old, while making an excursion beyond the frontiers of Italy, they passed a week on the shores of the Lake of Como. Their benevolent disposition often made them enter the cottages of the poor. This, to my mother, was more than a duty; it was a necessity, a passion—remembering what she had suffered, and how she had been relieved—for her to act in her turn the guardian angel to the afflicted. During one of their walks a poor cot in the foldings of a vale attracted their notice as being singularly disconsolate, while the number of half-clothed children gathered about it spoke of penury in its worst shape. One day, when my father had gone by himself to Milan, my mother, accompanied by me, visited this abode. She found a peasant and his wife, hard working, bent down by care and labour, distributing a scanty meal to five hungry babes. Among these there was one which attracted my mother far above all the rest. She appeared of a different stock. The four others were dark-eyed, hardy little vagrants; this child was thin and very fair. Her hair was the brightest living gold, and despite the poverty of her clothing, seemed to set a crown of distinction on her head. Her brow was clear and ample, her blue eyes cloudless, and her lips and the moulding of her face so expressive of sensibility and sweetness that none could behold her without looking on her as of a distinct species, a being heaven-sent, and bearing a celestial stamp in

all her features. The peasant woman, perceiving that my mother fixed eyes of wonder and admiration on this lovely girl, eagerly communicated her history. She was not her child, but the daughter of a Milanese nobleman. Her mother was a German and had died on giving her birth. The infant had been placed with these good people to nurse: they were better off then. They had not been long married, and their eldest child was but just born. The father of their charge was one of those Italians nursed in the memory of the antique glory of Italy—one among the schiavi ognor frementi, who exerted himself to obtain the liberty of his country. He became the victim of its weakness. Whether he had died or still lingered in the dungeons of Austria was not known. His property was confiscated; his child became an orphan and a beggar. She continued with her foster parents and bloomed in their rude abode, fairer than a garden rose among dark-leaved brambles. When my father returned from Milan, he found playing with me in the hall of our villa a child fairer than pictured cherub—a creature who seemed to shed radiance from her looks and whose form and motions were lighter than the chamois of the hills. The apparition was soon explained. With his permission my mother prevailed on her rustic guardians to yield their charge to her. They were fond of the sweet orphan. Her presence had seemed a blessing to them, but it would be unfair to her to keep her in poverty and want when Providence afforded her such powerful protection. They consulted their village priest, and the result was that Elizabeth Lavenza became the inmate of my parents' house—my more than sister—the beautiful and adored companion of all my occupations and my pleasures.

Everyone loved Elizabeth. The passionate and almost reverential attachment with which all regarded her became, while I shared it, my pride and my delight. On the evening previous to her being brought to my home, my mother had said playfully, "I have a pretty present for my Victor—tomorrow he shall have it." And when, on the morrow, she presented Elizabeth to me as her promised gift, I, with childish seriousness, interpreted her words literally and looked upon Elizabeth as mine—mine to protect, love, and cherish. All praises bestowed on her I received as made to a possession of my own. We called each other familiarly by the name of cousin. No word, no expression could body forth the kind of relation in which she stood to me—my more than sister, since till death she was to be mine only.

Chapter 2

We were brought up together; there was not quite a year difference in our ages. I need not say that we were strangers to any species of disunion or dispute. Harmony was the soul of our companionship, and the diversity and contrast that subsisted in our characters drew us nearer together. Elizabeth was of a calmer and more concentrated disposition; but, with all my ardour, I was capable of a more intense application and was more deeply smitten with the thirst for knowledge. She busied herself with following the aerial creations of the poets; and in the majestic and wondrous scenes which surrounded our Swiss home —the sublime shapes of the mountains, the changes of the seasons, tempest and calm, the silence of winter, and the life and turbulence of our Alpine summers—she found ample scope for admiration and delight. While my companion contemplated with a serious and satisfied spirit the magnificent appearances of things, I delighted in investigating their causes. The world was to me a secret which I desired to divine. Curiosity, earnest research to learn the hidden laws of nature, gladness akin to rapture, as they were unfolded to me, are among the earliest sensations I can remember.

On the birth of a second son, my junior by seven years, my parents gave up entirely their wandering life and fixed themselves in their native country. We possessed a house in Geneva, and a campagne on Belrive, the eastern shore of the lake, at the distance of rather more than a league from the city. We resided principally in the latter, and the lives of my parents were passed in considerable seclusion. It was my temper to avoid a crowd and to attach myself fervently to a few. I was indifferent, therefore, to my school-fellows in general; but I united myself in the bonds of the closest friendship to one among them. Henry Clerval was the son of a merchant of Geneva. He was a boy of singular talent and fancy. He loved enterprise, hardship, and even danger for its own sake. He was deeply read in books of chivalry and romance. He composed heroic songs and began to write many a tale of enchantment and knightly adventure. He tried to make us act plays and to enter into masquerades, in which the characters were drawn from the heroes of Roncesvalles, of the Round Table of King Arthur, and the chivalrous train who shed their blood to redeem the holy sepulchre from the hands of the infidels.

No human being could have passed a happier childhood than myself. My parents were possessed by the very spirit of kindness and indulgence. We felt that they were not the tyrants to rule our lot according to their caprice, but the agents and creators of all the many delights which we enjoyed. When I mingled with other families I distinctly discerned how peculiarly fortunate my lot was, and gratitude assisted the development of filial love.

My temper was sometimes violent, and my passions vehement; but by some law in my temperature they were turned not towards childish pursuits but to an eager desire to learn, and not to learn all things indiscriminately. I confess that neither the structure of languages, nor the code of governments, nor the politics of various states possessed attractions for me. It was the secrets of heaven and earth that I desired to learn; and whether it was the outward substance of things or the inner spirit of nature and the mysterious soul of man that occupied me, still my inquiries were directed to the metaphysical, or in its highest sense, the physical secrets of the world.

Meanwhile Clerval occupied himself, so to speak, with the moral relations of things. The busy stage of life, the virtues of heroes, and the actions of men were his theme; and his hope and his dream was to become one among those whose names are recorded in story as the gallant and adventurous benefactors of our species. The saintly soul of Elizabeth shone like a shrine-dedicated lamp in our peaceful home. Her sympathy was ours; her smile, her soft voice, the sweet glance of her celestial eyes, were ever there to bless and animate us. She was the living spirit of love to soften and attract; I might have become sullen in my study, rought through the ardour of my nature, but that she was there to subdue me to a semblance of her own gentleness. And Clerval—could aught ill entrench on the noble spirit of Clerval? Yet he might not have been so perfectly humane, so thoughtful in his generosity, so full of kindness and tenderness amidst his passion for adventurous exploit, had she not unfolded to him the real loveliness of beneficence and made the doing good the end and aim of his soaring ambition.

I feel exquisite pleasure in dwelling on the recollections of childhood, before misfortune had tainted my mind and changed its bright visions of extensive usefulness into gloomy and narrow reflections upon self. Besides, in drawing the picture of my early days, I also record those events which led, by insensible steps, to my after tale of misery, for when I would account to myself for the birth of that passion which afterwards ruled my

destiny I find it arise, like a mountain river, from ignoble and almost forgotten sources; but, swelling as it proceeded, it became the torrent which, in its course, has swept away all my hopes and joys. Natural philosophy is the genius that has regulated my fate; I desire, therefore, in this narration, to state those facts which led to my predilection for that science. When I was thirteen years of age we all went on a party of pleasure to the baths near Thonon; the inclemency of the weather obliged us to remain a day confined to the inn. In this house I chanced to find a volume of the works of Cornelius Agrippa. I opened it with apathy; the theory which he attempts to demonstrate and the wonderful facts which he relates soon changed this feeling into enthusiasm. A new light seemed to dawn upon my mind, and bounding with joy, I communicated my discovery to my father. My father looked carelessly at the title page of my book and said, “Ah! Cornelius Agrippa! My dear Victor, do not waste your time upon this; it is sad trash.”

If, instead of this remark, my father had taken the pains to explain to me that the principles of Agrippa had been entirely exploded and that a modern system of science had been introduced which possessed much greater powers than the ancient, because the powers of the latter were chimerical, while those of the former were real and practical, under such circumstances I should certainly have thrown Agrippa aside and have contented my imagination, warmed as it was, by returning with greater ardour to my former studies. It is even possible that the train of my ideas would never have received the fatal impulse that led to my ruin. But the cursory glance my father had taken of my volume by no means assured me that he was acquainted with its contents, and I continued to read with the greatest avidity. When I returned home my first care was to procure the whole works of this author, and afterwards of Paracelsus and Albertus Magnus. I read and studied the wild fancies of these writers with delight; they appeared to me treasures known to few besides myself. I have described myself as always having been imbued with a fervent longing to penetrate the secrets of nature. In spite of the intense labour and wonderful discoveries of modern philosophers, I always came from my studies discontented and unsatisfied. Sir Isaac Newton is said to have avowed that he felt like a child picking up shells beside the great and unexplored ocean of truth. Those of his successors in each branch of natural philosophy with whom I was acquainted appeared even to my boy’s apprehensions as tyros engaged in the same pursuit.

The untaught peasant beheld the elements around him and was acquainted with their practical uses. The most learned philosopher knew little more. He had partially unveiled the face of Nature, but her immortal lineaments were still a wonder and a mystery. He might dissect, anatomize, and give names; but, not to speak of a final cause, causes in their secondary and tertiary grades were utterly unknown to him. I had gazed upon the fortifications and impediments that seemed to keep human beings from entering the citadel of nature, and rashly and ignorantly I had repined.

But here were books, and here were men who had penetrated deeper and knew more. I took their word for all that they averred, and I became their disciple. It may appear strange that such should arise in the eighteenth century; but while I followed the routine of education in the schools of Geneva, I was, to a great degree, self-taught with regard to my favourite studies. My father was not scientific, and I was left to struggle with a child's blindness, added to a student's thirst for knowledge. Under the guidance of my new preceptors I entered with the greatest diligence into the search of the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life; but the latter soon obtained my undivided attention. Wealth was an inferior object, but what glory would attend the discovery if I could banish disease from the human frame and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death! Nor were these my only visions. The raising of ghosts or devils was a promise liberally accorded by my favourite authors, the fulfilment of which I most eagerly sought; and if my incantations were always unsuccessful, I attributed the failure rather to my own inexperience and mistake than to a want of skill or fidelity in my instructors. And thus for a time I was occupied by exploded systems, mingling, like an unadept, a thousand contradictory theories and floundering desperately in a very slough of multifarious knowledge, guided by an ardent imagination and childish reasoning, till an accident again changed the current of my ideas. When I was about fifteen years old we had retired to our house near Belrive, when we witnessed a most violent and terrible thunderstorm. It advanced from behind the mountains of Jura, and the thunder burst at once with frightful loudness from various quarters of the heavens. I remained, while the storm lasted, watching its progress with curiosity and delight. As I stood at the door, on a sudden I beheld a stream of fire issue from an old and beautiful oak which stood about twenty yards from our house; and so soon as the dazzling light vanished, the oak had disappeared, and nothing remained but a blasted stump. When we visited it

the next morning, we found the tree shattered in a singular manner. It was not splintered by the shock, but entirely reduced to thin ribbons of wood. I never beheld anything so utterly destroyed.

Before this I was not unacquainted with the more obvious laws of electricity. On this occasion a man of great research in natural philosophy was with us, and excited by this catastrophe, he entered on the explanation of a theory which he had formed on the subject of electricity and galvanism, which was at once new and astonishing to me. All that he said threw greatly into the shade Cornelius Agrippa, Albertus Magnus, and Paracelsus, the lords of my imagination; but by some fatality the overthrow of these men disinclined me to pursue my accustomed studies. It seemed to me as if nothing would or could ever be known. All that had so long engaged my attention suddenly grew despicable. By one of those caprices of the mind which we are perhaps most subject to in early youth, I at once gave up my former occupations, set down natural history and all its progeny as a deformed and abortive creation, and entertained the greatest disdain for a would-be science which could never even step within the threshold of real knowledge. In this mood of mind I betook myself to the mathematics and the branches of study appertaining to that science as being built upon secure foundations, and so worthy of my consideration.

Thus strangely are our souls constructed, and by such slight ligaments are we bound to prosperity or ruin. When I look back, it seems to me as if this almost miraculous change of inclination and will was the immediate suggestion of the guardian angel of my life—the last effort made by the spirit of preservation to avert the storm that was even then hanging in the stars and ready to envelop me. Her victory was announced by an unusual tranquillity and gladness of soul which followed the relinquishing of my ancient and latterly tormenting studies. It was thus that I was to be taught to associate evil with their prosecution, happiness with their disregard.

It was a strong effort of the spirit of good, but it was ineffectual. Destiny was too potent, and her immutable laws had decreed my utter and terrible destruction.

Chapter 3

When I had attained the age of seventeen my parents resolved that I should become a student at the university of Ingolstadt. I had hitherto attended the schools of Geneva, but my father thought it necessary for the completion of my education that I should be made acquainted with other customs than those of my native country. My departure was therefore fixed at an early date, but before the day resolved upon could arrive, the first misfortune of my life occurred—an omen, as it were, of my future misery. Elizabeth had caught the scarlet fever; her illness was severe, and she was in the greatest danger. During her illness many arguments had been urged to persuade my mother to refrain from attending upon her. She had at first yielded to our entreaties, but when she heard that the life of her favourite was menaced, she could no longer control her anxiety. She attended her sickbed; her watchful attentions triumphed over the malignity of the distemper—Elizabeth was saved, but the consequences of this imprudence were fatal to her preserver. On the third day my mother sickened; her fever was accompanied by the most alarming symptoms, and the looks of her medical attendants prognosticated the worst event. On her deathbed the fortitude and benignity of this best of women did not desert her. She joined the hands of Elizabeth and myself. “My children,” she said, “my firmest hopes of future happiness were placed on the prospect of your union. This expectation will now be the consolation of your father. Elizabeth, my love, you must supply my place to my younger children. Alas! I regret that I am taken from you; and, happy and beloved as I have been, is it not hard to quit you all? But these are not thoughts befitting me; I will endeavour to resign myself cheerfully to death and will indulge a hope of meeting you in another world.”

She died calmly, and her countenance expressed affection even in death. I need not describe the feelings of those whose dearest ties are rent by that most irreparable evil, the void that presents itself to the soul, and the despair that is exhibited on the countenance. It is so long before the mind can persuade itself that she whom we saw every day and whose very existence appeared a part of our own can have departed forever—that the brightness of a beloved eye can have been extinguished and the sound of a voice so familiar and dear to the ear can be hushed, never more to be heard. These

are the reflections of the first days; but when the lapse of time proves the reality of the evil, then the actual bitterness of grief commences. Yet from whom has not that rude hand rent away some dear connection? And why should I describe a sorrow which all have felt, and must feel? The time at length arrives when grief is rather an indulgence than a necessity; and the smile that plays upon the lips, although it may be deemed a sacrilege, is not banished. My mother was dead, but we had still duties which we ought to perform; we must continue our course with the rest and learn to think ourselves fortunate whilst one remains whom the spoiler has not seized.

My departure for Ingolstadt, which had been deferred by these events, was now again determined upon. I obtained from my father a respite of some weeks. It appeared to me sacrilege so soon to leave the repose, akin to death, of the house of mourning and to rush into the thick of life. I was new to sorrow, but it did not the less alarm me. I was unwilling to quit the sight of those that remained to me, and above all, I desired to see my sweet Elizabeth in some degree consoled.

She indeed veiled her grief and strove to act the comforter to us all. She looked steadily on life and assumed its duties with courage and zeal. She devoted herself to those whom she had been taught to call her uncle and cousins. Never was she so enchanting as at this time, when she recalled the sunshine of her smiles and spent them upon us. She forgot even her own regret in her endeavours to make us forget.

The day of my departure at length arrived. Clerval spent the last evening with us. He had endeavoured to persuade his father to permit him to accompany me and to become my fellow student, but in vain. His father was a narrow-minded trader and saw idleness and ruin in the aspirations and ambition of his son. Henry deeply felt the misfortune of being debarred from a liberal education. He said little, but when he spoke I read in his kindling eye and in his animated glance a restrained but firm resolve not to be chained to the miserable details of commerce.

We sat late. We could not tear ourselves away from each other nor persuade ourselves to say the word “Farewell!” It was said, and we retired under the pretence of seeking repose, each fancying that the other was deceived; but when at morning’s dawn I descended to the carriage which was to convey me away, they were all there—my father again to bless me, Clerval to press my hand once more, my Elizabeth to renew her entreaties

that I would write often and to bestow the last feminine attentions on her playmate and friend.

I threw myself into the chaise that was to convey me away and indulged in the most melancholy reflections. I, who had ever been surrounded by amiable companions, continually engaged in endeavouring to bestow mutual pleasure—I was now alone. In the university whither I was going I must form my own friends and be my own protector. My life had hitherto been remarkably secluded and domestic, and this had given me invincible repugnance to new countenances. I loved my brothers, Elizabeth, and Clerval; these were "old familiar faces," but I believed myself totally unfitted for the company of strangers. Such were my reflections as I commenced my journey; but as I proceeded, my spirits and hopes rose. I ardently desired the acquisition of knowledge. I had often, when at home, thought it hard to remain during my youth cooped up in one place and had longed to enter the world and take my station among other human beings. Now my desires were complied with, and it would, indeed, have been folly to repent.

I had sufficient leisure for these and many other reflections during my journey to Ingolstadt, which was long and fatiguing. At length the high white steeple of the town met my eyes. I alighted and was conducted to my solitary apartment to spend the evening as I pleased.

The next morning I delivered my letters of introduction and paid a visit to some of the principal professors. Chance—or rather the evil influence, the Angel of Destruction, which asserted omnipotent sway over me from the moment I turned my reluctant steps from my father's door—led me first to M. Krempe, professor of natural philosophy. He was an uncouth man, but deeply imbued in the secrets of his science. He asked me several questions concerning my progress in the different branches of science appertaining to natural philosophy. I replied carelessly, and partly in contempt, mentioned the names of my alchemists as the principal authors I had studied. The professor stared. "Have you," he said, "really spent your time in studying such nonsense?"

I replied in the affirmative. "Every minute," continued M. Krempe with warmth, "every instant that you have wasted on those books is utterly and entirely lost. You have burdened your memory with exploded systems and useless names. Good God! In what desert land have you lived, where no one was kind enough to inform you that these fancies which you have so

greedily imbibed are a thousand years old and as musty as they are ancient? I little expected, in this enlightened and scientific age, to find a disciple of Albertus Magnus and Paracelsus. My dear sir, you must begin your studies entirely anew."

So saying, he stepped aside and wrote down a list of several books treating of natural philosophy which he desired me to procure, and dismissed me after mentioning that in the beginning of the following week he intended to commence a course of lectures upon natural philosophy in its general relations, and that M. Waldman, a fellow professor, would lecture upon chemistry the alternate days that he omitted.

I returned home not disappointed, for I have said that I had long considered those authors useless whom the professor reprobated; but I returned not at all the more inclined to recur to these studies in any shape. M. Krempe was a little squat man with a gruff voice and a repulsive countenance; the teacher, therefore, did not prepossess me in favour of his pursuits. In rather a too philosophical and connected a strain, perhaps, I have given an account of the conclusions I had come to concerning them in my early years. As a child I had not been content with the results promised by the modern professors of natural science. With a confusion of ideas only to be accounted for by my extreme youth and my want of a guide on such matters, I had retrod the steps of knowledge along the paths of time and exchanged the discoveries of recent inquirers for the dreams of forgotten alchemists. Besides, I had a contempt for the uses of modern natural philosophy. It was very different when the masters of the science sought immortality and power; such views, although futile, were grand; but now the scene was changed. The ambition of the inquirer seemed to limit itself to the annihilation of those visions on which my interest in science was chiefly founded. I was required to exchange chimeras of boundless grandeur for realities of little worth.

Such were my reflections during the first two or three days of my residence at Ingolstadt, which were chiefly spent in becoming acquainted with the localities and the principal residents in my new abode. But as the ensuing week commenced, I thought of the information which M. Krempe had given me concerning the lectures. And although I could not consent to go and hear that little conceited fellow deliver sentences out of a pulpit, I recollected what he had said of M. Waldman, whom I had never seen, as he had hitherto been out of town.

Partly from curiosity and partly from idleness, I went into the lecturing room, which M. Waldman entered shortly after. This professor was very unlike his colleague. He appeared about fifty years of age, but with an aspect expressive of the greatest benevolence; a few grey hairs covered his temples, but those at the back of his head were nearly black. His person was short but remarkably erect and his voice the sweetest I had ever heard. He began his lecture by a recapitulation of the history of chemistry and the various improvements made by different men of learning, pronouncing with fervour the names of the most distinguished discoverers. He then took a cursory view of the present state of the science and explained many of its elementary terms. After having made a few preparatory experiments, he concluded with a panegyric upon modern chemistry, the terms of which I shall never forget: "The ancient teachers of this science," said he, "promised impossibilities and performed nothing. The modern masters promise very little; they know that metals cannot be transmuted and that the elixir of life is a chimera but these philosophers, whose hands seem only made to dabble in dirt, and their eyes to pore over the microscope or crucible, have indeed performed miracles. They penetrate into the recesses of nature and show how she works in her hiding-places. They ascend into the heavens; they have discovered how the blood circulates, and the nature of the air we breathe. They have acquired new and almost unlimited powers; they can command the thunders of heaven, mimic the earthquake, and even mock the invisible world with its own shadows."

Such were the professor's words—rather let me say such the words of the fate—enounced to destroy me. As he went on I felt as if my soul were grappling with a palpable enemy; one by one the various keys were touched which formed the mechanism of my being; chord after chord was sounded, and soon my mind was filled with one thought, one conception, one purpose. So much has been done, exclaimed the soul of Frankenstein—more, far more, will I achieve; treading in the steps already marked, I will pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation.

I closed not my eyes that night. My internal being was in a state of insurrection and turmoil; I felt that order would thence arise, but I had no power to produce it. By degrees, after the morning's dawn, sleep came. I awoke, and my yesternight's thoughts were as a dream. There only remained a resolution to return to my ancient studies and to devote myself

to a science for which I believed myself to possess a natural talent. On the same day I paid M. Waldman a visit. His manners in private were even more mild and attractive than in public, for there was a certain dignity in his mien during his lecture which in his own house was replaced by the greatest affability and kindness. I gave him pretty nearly the same account of my former pursuits as I had given to his fellow professor. He heard with attention the little narration concerning my studies and smiled at the names of Cornelius Agrippa and Paracelsus, but without the contempt that M. Krempe had exhibited. He said that "These were men to whose indefatigable zeal modern philosophers were indebted for most of the foundations of their knowledge. They had left to us, as an easier task, to give new names and arrange in connected classifications the facts which they in a great degree had been the instruments of bringing to light. The labours of men of genius, however erroneously directed, scarcely ever fail in ultimately turning to the solid advantage of mankind." I listened to his statement, which was delivered without any presumption or affectation, and then added that his lecture had removed my prejudices against modern chemists; I expressed myself in measured terms, with the modesty and deference due from a youth to his instructor, without letting escape (inexperience in life would have made me ashamed) any of the enthusiasm which stimulated my intended labours. I requested his advice concerning the books I ought to procure.

"I am happy," said M. Waldman, "to have gained a disciple; and if your application equals your ability, I have no doubt of your success. Chemistry is that branch of natural philosophy in which the greatest improvements have been and may be made; it is on that account that I have made it my peculiar study; but at the same time, I have not neglected the other branches of science. A man would make but a very sorry chemist if he attended to that department of human knowledge alone. If your wish is to become really a man of science and not merely a petty experimentalist, I should advise you to apply to every branch of natural philosophy, including mathematics." He then took me into his laboratory and explained to me the uses of his various machines, instructing me as to what I ought to procure and promising me the use of his own when I should have advanced far enough in the science not to derange their mechanism. He also gave me the list of books which I had requested, and I took my leave.

Thus ended a day memorable to me; it decided my future destiny.

Chapter 4

From this day natural philosophy, and particularly chemistry, in the most comprehensive sense of the term, became nearly my sole occupation. I read with ardour those works, so full of genius and discrimination, which modern inquirers have written on these subjects. I attended the lectures and cultivated the acquaintance of the men of science of the university, and I found even in M. Krempe a great deal of sound sense and real information, combined, it is true, with a repulsive physiognomy and manners, but not on that account the less valuable. In M. Waldman I found a true friend. His gentleness was never tinged by dogmatism, and his instructions were given with an air of frankness and good nature that banished every idea of pedantry. In a thousand ways he smoothed for me the path of knowledge and made the most abstruse inquiries clear and facile to my apprehension. My application was at first fluctuating and uncertain; it gained strength as I proceeded and soon became so ardent and eager that the stars often disappeared in the light of morning whilst I was yet engaged in my laboratory.

As I applied so closely, it may be easily conceived that my progress was rapid. My ardour was indeed the astonishment of the students, and my proficiency that of the masters. Professor Krempe often asked me, with a sly smile, how Cornelius Agrippa went on, whilst M. Waldman expressed the most heartfelt exultation in my progress. Two years passed in this manner, during which I paid no visit to Geneva, but was engaged, heart and soul, in the pursuit of some discoveries which I hoped to make. None but those who have experienced them can conceive of the enticements of science. In other studies you go as far as others have gone before you, and there is nothing more to know; but in a scientific pursuit there is continual food for discovery and wonder. A mind of moderate capacity which closely pursues one study must infallibly arrive at great proficiency in that study; and I, who continually sought the attainment of one object of pursuit and was solely wrapped up in this, improved so rapidly that at the end of two years I made some discoveries in the improvement of some chemical instruments, which procured me great esteem and admiration at the university. When I had arrived at this point and had become as well acquainted with the theory and practice of natural philosophy as depended

on the lessons of any of the professors at Ingolstadt, my residence there being no longer conducive to my improvements, I thought of returning to my friends and my native town, when an incident happened that protracted my stay.

One of the phenomena which had peculiarly attracted my attention was the structure of the human frame, and, indeed, any animal endued with life. Whence, I often asked myself, did the principle of life proceed? It was a bold question, and one which has ever been considered as a mystery; yet with how many things are we upon the brink of becoming acquainted, if cowardice or carelessness did not restrain our inquiries. I revolved these circumstances in my mind and determined thenceforth to apply myself more particularly to those branches of natural philosophy which relate to physiology. Unless I had been animated by an almost supernatural enthusiasm, my application to this study would have been irksome and almost intolerable. To examine the causes of life, we must first have recourse to death. I became acquainted with the science of anatomy, but this was not sufficient; I must also observe the natural decay and corruption of the human body. In my education my father had taken the greatest precautions that my mind should be impressed with no supernatural horrors. I do not ever remember to have trembled at a tale of superstition or to have feared the apparition of a spirit. Darkness had no effect upon my fancy, and a churchyard was to me merely the receptacle of bodies deprived of life, which, from being the seat of beauty and strength, had become food for the worm. Now I was led to examine the cause and progress of this decay and forced to spend days and nights in vaults and charnel-houses. My attention was fixed upon every object the most insupportable to the delicacy of the human feelings. I saw how the fine form of man was degraded and wasted; I beheld the corruption of death succeed to the blooming cheek of life; I saw how the worm inherited the wonders of the eye and brain. I paused, examining and analysing all the minutiae of causation, as exemplified in the change from life to death, and death to life, until from the midst of this darkness a sudden light broke in upon me—a light so brilliant and wondrous, yet so simple, that while I became dizzy with the immensity of the prospect which it illustrated, I was surprised that among so many men of genius who had directed their inquiries towards the same science, that I alone should be reserved to discover so astonishing a secret.

Remember, I am not recording the vision of a madman. The sun does not more certainly shine in the heavens than that which I now affirm is true. Some miracle might have produced it, yet the stages of the discovery were distinct and probable. After days and nights of incredible labour and fatigue, I succeeded in discovering the cause of generation and life; nay, more, I became myself capable of bestowing animation upon lifeless matter.

The astonishment which I had at first experienced on this discovery soon gave place to delight and rapture. After so much time spent in painful labour, to arrive at once at the summit of my desires was the most gratifying consummation of my toils. But this discovery was so great and overwhelming that all the steps by which I had been progressively led to it were obliterated, and I beheld only the result. What had been the study and desire of the wisest men since the creation of the world was now within my grasp. Not that, like a magic scene, it all opened upon me at once: the information I had obtained was of a nature rather to direct my endeavours so soon as I should point them towards the object of my search than to exhibit that object already accomplished. I was like the Arabian who had been buried with the dead and found a passage to life, aided only by one glimmering and seemingly ineffectual light.

I see by your eagerness and the wonder and hope which your eyes express, my friend, that you expect to be informed of the secret with which I am acquainted; that cannot be; listen patiently until the end of my story, and you will easily perceive why I am reserved upon that subject. I will not lead you on, unguarded and ardent as I then was, to your destruction and infallible misery. Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow.

When I found so astonishing a power placed within my hands, I hesitated a long time concerning the manner in which I should employ it. Although I possessed the capacity of bestowing animation, yet to prepare a frame for the reception of it, with all its intricacies of fibres, muscles, and veins, still remained a work of inconceivable difficulty and labour. I doubted at first whether I should attempt the creation of a being like myself, or one of simpler organization; but my imagination was too much exalted by my first success to permit me to doubt of my ability to give life to an animal as complex and wonderful as man. The materials at present within my

command hardly appeared adequate to so arduous an undertaking, but I doubted not that I should ultimately succeed. I prepared myself for a multitude of reverses; my operations might be incessantly baffled, and at last my work be imperfect, yet when I considered the improvement which every day takes place in science and mechanics, I was encouraged to hope my present attempts would at least lay the foundations of future success. Nor could I consider the magnitude and complexity of my plan as any argument of its impracticability. It was with these feelings that I began the creation of a human being. As the minuteness of the parts formed a great hindrance to my speed, I resolved, contrary to my first intention, to make the being of a gigantic stature, that is to say, about eight feet in height, and proportionably large. After having formed this determination and having spent some months in successfully collecting and arranging my materials, I began.

No one can conceive the variety of feelings which bore me onwards, like a hurricane, in the first enthusiasm of success. Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world. A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs. Pursuing these reflections, I thought that if I could bestow animation upon lifeless matter, I might in process of time (although I now found it impossible) renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption.

These thoughts supported my spirits, while I pursued my undertaking with unremitting ardour. My cheek had grown pale with study, and my person had become emaciated with confinement. Sometimes, on the very brink of certainty, I failed; yet still I clung to the hope which the next day or the next hour might realize. One secret which I alone possessed was the hope to which I had dedicated myself; and the moon gazed on my midnight labours, while, with unrelaxed and breathless eagerness, I pursued nature to her hiding-places. Who shall conceive the horrors of my secret toil as I dabbled among the unhallowed damps of the grave or tortured the living animal to animate the lifeless clay? My limbs now tremble, and my eyes swim with the remembrance; but then a resistless and almost frantic impulse urged me forward; I seemed to have lost all soul or sensation but for this one pursuit. It was indeed but a passing trance, that only made me

feel with renewed acuteness so soon as, the unnatural stimulus ceasing to operate, I had returned to my old habits. I collected bones from charnel-houses and disturbed, with profane fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame. In a solitary chamber, or rather cell, at the top of the house, and separated from all the other apartments by a gallery and staircase, I kept my workshop of filthy creation; my eyeballs were starting from their sockets in attending to the details of my employment. The dissecting room and the slaughter-house furnished many of my materials; and often did my human nature turn with loathing from my occupation, whilst, still urged on by an eagerness which perpetually increased, I brought my work near to a conclusion.

The summer months passed while I was thus engaged, heart and soul, in one pursuit. It was a most beautiful season; never did the fields bestow a more plentiful harvest or the vines yield a more luxuriant vintage, but my eyes were insensible to the charms of nature. And the same feelings which made me neglect the scenes around me caused me also to forget those friends who were so many miles absent, and whom I had not seen for so long a time. I knew my silence disquieted them, and I well remembered the words of my father: “I know that while you are pleased with yourself you will think of us with affection, and we shall hear regularly from you. You must pardon me if I regard any interruption in your correspondence as a proof that your other duties are equally neglected.”

I knew well therefore what would be my father’s feelings, but I could not tear my thoughts from my employment, loathsome in itself, but which had taken an irresistible hold of my imagination. I wished, as it were, to procrastinate all that related to my feelings of affection until the great object, which swallowed up every habit of my nature, should be completed.

I then thought that my father would be unjust if he ascribed my neglect to vice or faultiness on my part, but I am now convinced that he was justified in conceiving that I should not be altogether free from blame. A human being in perfection ought always to preserve a calm and peaceful mind and never to allow passion or a transitory desire to disturb his tranquillity. I do not think that the pursuit of knowledge is an exception to this rule. If the study to which you apply yourself has a tendency to weaken your affections and to destroy your taste for those simple pleasures in which no alloy can possibly mix, then that study is certainly unlawful, that is to say, not befitting the human mind. If this rule were always observed; if no

man allowed any pursuit whatsoever to interfere with the tranquillity of his domestic affections, Greece had not been enslaved, Caesar would have spared his country, America would have been discovered more gradually, and the empires of Mexico and Peru had not been destroyed.

But I forget that I am moralizing in the most interesting part of my tale, and your looks remind me to proceed. My father made no reproach in his letters and only took notice of my silence by inquiring into my occupations more particularly than before. Winter, spring, and summer passed away during my labours; but I did not watch the blossom or the expanding leaves —sights which before always yielded me supreme delight—so deeply was I engrossed in my occupation. The leaves of that year had withered before my work drew near to a close, and now every day showed me more plainly how well I had succeeded. But my enthusiasm was checked by my anxiety, and I appeared rather like one doomed by slavery to toil in the mines, or any other unwholesome trade than an artist occupied by his favourite employment. Every night I was oppressed by a slow fever, and I became nervous to a most painful degree; the fall of a leaf startled me, and I shunned my fellow creatures as if I had been guilty of a crime. Sometimes I grew alarmed at the wreck I perceived that I had become; the energy of my purpose alone sustained me: my labours would soon end, and I believed that exercise and amusement would then drive away incipient disease; and I promised myself both of these when my creation should be complete.

Chapter 5

It was on a dreary night of November that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.

How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips.

The different accidents of life are not so changeable as the feelings of human nature. I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart. Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room and continued a long time traversing my bed-chamber, unable to compose my mind to sleep. At length lassitude succeeded to the tumult I had before endured, and I threw myself on the bed in my clothes, endeavouring to seek a few moments of forgetfulness. But it was in vain; I slept, indeed, but I was disturbed by the wildest dreams. I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her, but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel. I started from my sleep with

horror; a cold dew covered my forehead, my teeth chattered, and every limb became convulsed; when, by the dim and yellow light of the moon, as it forced its way through the window shutters, I beheld the wretch—the miserable monster whom I had created. He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks. He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped and rushed downstairs. I took refuge in the courtyard belonging to the house which I inhabited, where I remained during the rest of the night, walking up and down in the greatest agitation, listening attentively, catching and fearing each sound as if it were to announce the approach of the demoniacal corpse to which I had so miserably given life.

Oh! No mortal could support the horror of that countenance. A mummy again endued with animation could not be so hideous as that wretch. I had gazed on him while unfinished; he was ugly then, but when those muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion, it became a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived.

I passed the night wretchedly. Sometimes my pulse beat so quickly and hardly that I felt the palpitation of every artery; at others, I nearly sank to the ground through languor and extreme weakness. Mingled with this horror, I felt the bitterness of disappointment; dreams that had been my food and pleasant rest for so long a space were now become a hell to me; and the change was so rapid, the overthrow so complete!

Morning, dismal and wet, at length dawned and discovered to my sleepless and aching eyes the church of Ingolstadt, its white steeple and clock, which indicated the sixth hour. The porter opened the gates of the court, which had that night been my asylum, and I issued into the streets, pacing them with quick steps, as if I sought to avoid the wretch whom I feared every turning of the street would present to my view. I did not dare return to the apartment which I inhabited, but felt impelled to hurry on, although drenched by the rain which poured from a black and comfortless sky.

I continued walking in this manner for some time, endeavouring by bodily exercise to ease the load that weighed upon my mind. I traversed the streets without any clear conception of where I was or what I was doing.

My heart palpitated in the sickness of fear, and I hurried on with irregular steps, not daring to look about me:

Like one who, on a lonely road,
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And, having once turned round, walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

[Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner."]

Continuing thus, I came at length opposite to the inn at which the various diligences and carriages usually stopped. Here I paused, I knew not why; but I remained some minutes with my eyes fixed on a coach that was coming towards me from the other end of the street. As it drew nearer I observed that it was the Swiss diligence; it stopped just where I was standing, and on the door being opened, I perceived Henry Clerval, who, on seeing me, instantly sprung out. "My dear Frankenstein," exclaimed he, "how glad I am to see you! How fortunate that you should be here at the very moment of my alighting!"

Nothing could equal my delight on seeing Clerval; his presence brought back to my thoughts my father, Elizabeth, and all those scenes of home so dear to my recollection. I grasped his hand, and in a moment forgot my horror and misfortune; I felt suddenly, and for the first time during many months, calm and serene joy. I welcomed my friend, therefore, in the most cordial manner, and we walked towards my college. Clerval continued talking for some time about our mutual friends and his own good fortune in being permitted to come to Ingolstadt. "You may easily believe," said he, "how great was the difficulty to persuade my father that all necessary knowledge was not comprised in the noble art of book-keeping; and, indeed, I believe I left him incredulous to the last, for his constant answer to my unwearied entreaties was the same as that of the Dutch schoolmaster in The Vicar of Wakefield: 'I have ten thousand florins a year without Greek, I eat heartily without Greek.' But his affection for me at length overcame his dislike of learning, and he has permitted me to undertake a voyage of discovery to the land of knowledge."

“It gives me the greatest delight to see you; but tell me how you left my father, brothers, and Elizabeth.”

“Very well, and very happy, only a little uneasy that they hear from you so seldom. By the by, I mean to lecture you a little upon their account myself. But, my dear Frankenstein,” continued he, stopping short and gazing full in my face, “I did not before remark how very ill you appear; so thin and pale; you look as if you had been watching for several nights.”

“You have guessed right; I have lately been so deeply engaged in one occupation that I have not allowed myself sufficient rest, as you see; but I hope, I sincerely hope, that all these employments are now at an end and that I am at length free.”

I trembled excessively; I could not endure to think of, and far less to allude to, the occurrences of the preceding night. I walked with a quick pace, and we soon arrived at my college. I then reflected, and the thought made me shiver, that the creature whom I had left in my apartment might still be there, alive and walking about. I dreaded to behold this monster, but I feared still more that Henry should see him. Entreating him, therefore, to remain a few minutes at the bottom of the stairs, I darted up towards my own room. My hand was already on the lock of the door before I recollected myself. I then paused, and a cold shivering came over me. I threw the door forcibly open, as children are accustomed to do when they expect a spectre to stand in waiting for them on the other side; but nothing appeared. I stepped fearfully in: the apartment was empty, and my bedroom was also freed from its hideous guest. I could hardly believe that so great a good fortune could have befallen me, but when I became assured that my enemy had indeed fled, I clapped my hands for joy and ran down to Clerval.

We ascended into my room, and the servant presently brought breakfast; but I was unable to contain myself. It was not joy only that possessed me; I felt my flesh tingle with excess of sensitiveness, and my pulse beat rapidly. I was unable to remain for a single instant in the same place; I jumped over the chairs, clapped my hands, and laughed aloud. Clerval at first attributed my unusual spirits to joy on his arrival, but when he observed me more attentively, he saw a wildness in my eyes for which he could not account, and my loud, unrestrained, heartless laughter frightened and astonished him.

“My dear Victor,” cried he, “what, for God’s sake, is the matter? Do not laugh in that manner. How ill you are! What is the cause of all this?”

“Do not ask me,” cried I, putting my hands before my eyes, for I thought I saw the dreaded spectre glide into the room; “HE can tell. Oh, save me! Save me!” I imagined that the monster seized me; I struggled furiously and fell down in a fit.

Poor Clerval! What must have been his feelings? A meeting, which he anticipated with such joy, so strangely turned to bitterness. But I was not the witness of his grief, for I was lifeless and did not recover my senses for a long, long time.

This was the commencement of a nervous fever which confined me for several months. During all that time Henry was my only nurse. I afterwards learned that, knowing my father’s advanced age and unfitness for so long a journey, and how wretched my sickness would make Elizabeth, he spared them this grief by concealing the extent of my disorder. He knew that I could not have a more kind and attentive nurse than himself; and, firm in the hope he felt of my recovery, he did not doubt that, instead of doing harm, he performed the kindest action that he could towards them.

But I was in reality very ill, and surely nothing but the unbounded and unremitting attentions of my friend could have restored me to life. The form of the monster on whom I had bestowed existence was forever before my eyes, and I raved incessantly concerning him. Doubtless my words surprised Henry; he at first believed them to be the wanderings of my disturbed imagination, but the pertinacity with which I continually recurred to the same subject persuaded him that my disorder indeed owed its origin to some uncommon and terrible event.

By very slow degrees, and with frequent relapses that alarmed and grieved my friend, I recovered. I remember the first time I became capable of observing outward objects with any kind of pleasure, I perceived that the fallen leaves had disappeared and that the young buds were shooting forth from the trees that shaded my window. It was a divine spring, and the season contributed greatly to my convalescence. I felt also sentiments of joy and affection revive in my bosom; my gloom disappeared, and in a short time I became as cheerful as before I was attacked by the fatal passion.

“Dearest Clerval,” exclaimed I, “how kind, how very good you are to me. This whole winter, instead of being spent in study, as you promised yourself, has been consumed in my sick room. How shall I ever repay you? I feel the greatest remorse for the disappointment of which I have been the occasion, but you will forgive me.”

“You will repay me entirely if you do not discompose yourself, but get well as fast as you can; and since you appear in such good spirits, I may speak to you on one subject, may I not?”

I trembled. One subject! What could it be? Could he allude to an object on whom I dared not even think? “Compose yourself,” said Clerval, who observed my change of colour, “I will not mention it if it agitates you; but your father and cousin would be very happy if they received a letter from you in your own handwriting. They hardly know how ill you have been and are uneasy at your long silence.”

“Is that all, my dear Henry? How could you suppose that my first thought would not fly towards those dear, dear friends whom I love and who are so deserving of my love?”

“If this is your present temper, my friend, you will perhaps be glad to see a letter that has been lying here some days for you; it is from your cousin, I believe.”

Chapter 6

Clerval then put the following letter into my hands. It was from my own Elizabeth:

"My dearest Cousin,

"You have been ill, very ill, and even the constant letters of dear kind Henry are not sufficient to reassure me on your account. You are forbidden to write—to hold a pen; yet one word from you, dear Victor, is necessary to calm our apprehensions. For a long time I have thought that each post would bring this line, and my persuasions have restrained my uncle from undertaking a journey to Ingolstadt. I have prevented his encountering the inconveniences and perhaps dangers of so long a journey, yet how often have I regretted not being able to perform it myself! I figure to myself that the task of attending on your sickbed has devolved on some mercenary old nurse, who could never guess your wishes nor minister to them with the care and affection of your poor cousin. Yet that is over now: Clerval writes that indeed you are getting better. I eagerly hope that you will confirm this intelligence soon in your own handwriting.

"Get well—and return to us. You will find a happy, cheerful home and friends who love you dearly. Your father's health is vigorous, and he asks but to see you, but to be assured that you are well; and not a care will ever cloud his benevolent countenance. How pleased you would be to remark the improvement of our Ernest! He is now sixteen and full of activity and spirit. He is desirous to be a true Swiss and to enter into foreign service, but we cannot part with him, at least until his elder brother returns to us. My uncle is not pleased with the idea of a military career in a distant country, but Ernest never had your powers of application. He looks upon study as an odious fetter; his time is spent in the open air, climbing the hills or rowing on the lake. I fear that he will become an idler unless we yield the point and permit him to enter on the profession which he has selected.

"Little alteration, except the growth of our dear children, has taken place since you left us. The blue lake and snow-clad mountains—they never change; and I think our placid home and our contented hearts are regulated by the same immutable laws. My trifling occupations take up my time and amuse me, and I am rewarded for any exertions by seeing none but happy, kind faces around me. Since you left us, but one change has taken place in

our little household. Do you remember on what occasion Justine Moritz entered our family? Probably you do not; I will relate her history, therefore in a few words. Madame Moritz, her mother, was a widow with four children, of whom Justine was the third. This girl had always been the favourite of her father, but through a strange perversity, her mother could not endure her, and after the death of M. Moritz, treated her very ill. My aunt observed this, and when Justine was twelve years of age, prevailed on her mother to allow her to live at our house. The republican institutions of our country have produced simpler and happier manners than those which prevail in the great monarchies that surround it. Hence there is less distinction between the several classes of its inhabitants; and the lower orders, being neither so poor nor so despised, their manners are more refined and moral. A servant in Geneva does not mean the same thing as a servant in France and England. Justine, thus received in our family, learned the duties of a servant, a condition which, in our fortunate country, does not include the idea of ignorance and a sacrifice of the dignity of a human being.

"Justine, you may remember, was a great favourite of yours; and I recollect you once remarked that if you were in an ill humour, one glance from Justine could dissipate it, for the same reason that Ariosto gives concerning the beauty of Angelica—she looked so frank-hearted and happy. My aunt conceived a great attachment for her, by which she was induced to give her an education superior to that which she had at first intended. This benefit was fully repaid; Justine was the most grateful little creature in the world: I do not mean that she made any professions I never heard one pass her lips, but you could see by her eyes that she almost adored her protectress. Although her disposition was gay and in many respects inconsiderate, yet she paid the greatest attention to every gesture of my aunt. She thought her the model of all excellence and endeavoured to imitate her phraseology and manners, so that even now she often reminds me of her.

"When my dearest aunt died every one was too much occupied in their own grief to notice poor Justine, who had attended her during her illness with the most anxious affection. Poor Justine was very ill; but other trials were reserved for her.

"One by one, her brothers and sister died; and her mother, with the exception of her neglected daughter, was left childless. The conscience of

the woman was troubled; she began to think that the deaths of her favourites was a judgement from heaven to chastise her partiality. She was a Roman Catholic; and I believe her confessor confirmed the idea which she had conceived. Accordingly, a few months after your departure for Ingolstadt, Justine was called home by her repentant mother. Poor girl! She wept when she quitted our house; she was much altered since the death of my aunt; grief had given softness and a winning mildness to her manners, which had before been remarkable for vivacity. Nor was her residence at her mother's house of a nature to restore her gaiety. The poor woman was very vacillating in her repentance. She sometimes begged Justine to forgive her unkindness, but much oftener accused her of having caused the deaths of her brothers and sister. Perpetual fretting at length threw Madame Moritz into a decline, which at first increased her irritability, but she is now at peace for ever. She died on the first approach of cold weather, at the beginning of this last winter. Justine has just returned to us; and I assure you I love her tenderly. She is very clever and gentle, and extremely pretty; as I mentioned before, her mien and her expression continually remind me of my dear aunt.

"I must say also a few words to you, my dear cousin, of little darling William. I wish you could see him; he is very tall of his age, with sweet laughing blue eyes, dark eyelashes, and curling hair. When he smiles, two little dimples appear on each cheek, which are rosy with health. He has already had one or two little WIVES, but Louisa Biron is his favourite, a pretty little girl of five years of age.

"Now, dear Victor, I dare say you wish to be indulged in a little gossip concerning the good people of Geneva. The pretty Miss Mansfield has already received the congratulatory visits on her approaching marriage with a young Englishman, John Melbourne, Esq. Her ugly sister, Manon, married M. Duvillard, the rich banker, last autumn. Your favourite schoolfellow, Louis Manoir, has suffered several misfortunes since the departure of Clerval from Geneva. But he has already recovered his spirits, and is reported to be on the point of marrying a lively pretty Frenchwoman, Madame Tavernier. She is a widow, and much older than Manoir; but she is very much admired, and a favourite with everybody.

"I have written myself into better spirits, dear cousin; but my anxiety returns upon me as I conclude. Write, dearest Victor,—one line—one word will be a blessing to us. Ten thousand thanks to Henry for his kindness, his

affection, and his many letters; we are sincerely grateful. Adieu! my cousin; take care of your self; and, I entreat you, write!

"Elizabeth Lavenza.

"Geneva, March 18, 17—."

"Dear, dear Elizabeth!" I exclaimed, when I had read her letter: "I will write instantly and relieve them from the anxiety they must feel." I wrote, and this exertion greatly fatigued me; but my convalescence had commenced, and proceeded regularly. In another fortnight I was able to leave my chamber.

One of my first duties on my recovery was to introduce Clerval to the several professors of the university. In doing this, I underwent a kind of rough usage, ill befitting the wounds that my mind had sustained. Ever since the fatal night, the end of my labours, and the beginning of my misfortunes, I had conceived a violent antipathy even to the name of natural philosophy. When I was otherwise quite restored to health, the sight of a chemical instrument would renew all the agony of my nervous symptoms. Henry saw this, and had removed all my apparatus from my view. He had also changed my apartment; for he perceived that I had acquired a dislike for the room which had previously been my laboratory. But these cares of Clerval were made of no avail when I visited the professors. M. Waldman inflicted torture when he praised, with kindness and warmth, the astonishing progress I had made in the sciences. He soon perceived that I disliked the subject; but not guessing the real cause, he attributed my feelings to modesty, and changed the subject from my improvement, to the science itself, with a desire, as I evidently saw, of drawing me out. What could I do? He meant to please, and he tormented me. I felt as if he had placed carefully, one by one, in my view those instruments which were to be afterwards used in putting me to a slow and cruel death. I writhed under his words, yet dared not exhibit the pain I felt. Clerval, whose eyes and feelings were always quick in discerning the sensations of others, declined the subject, alleging, in excuse, his total ignorance; and the conversation took a more general turn. I thanked my friend from my heart, but I did not speak. I saw plainly that he was surprised, but he never attempted to draw my secret from me; and although I loved him with a mixture of affection and reverence that knew no bounds, yet I could never persuade myself to

confide in him that event which was so often present to my recollection, but which I feared the detail to another would only impress more deeply.

M. Krempe was not equally docile; and in my condition at that time, of almost insupportable sensitiveness, his harsh blunt encomiums gave me even more pain than the benevolent approbation of M. Waldman. “D—n the fellow!” cried he; “why, M. Clerval, I assure you he has outstript us all. Ay, stare if you please; but it is nevertheless true. A youngster who, but a few years ago, believed in Cornelius Agrippa as firmly as in the gospel, has now set himself at the head of the university; and if he is not soon pulled down, we shall all be out of countenance.—Ay, ay,” continued he, observing my face expressive of suffering, “M. Frankenstein is modest; an excellent quality in a young man. Young men should be diffident of themselves, you know, M. Clerval: I was myself when young; but that wears out in a very short time.”

M. Krempe had now commenced an eulogy on himself, which happily turned the conversation from a subject that was so annoying to me.

Clerval had never sympathized in my tastes for natural science; and his literary pursuits differed wholly from those which had occupied me. He came to the university with the design of making himself complete master of the oriental languages, and thus he should open a field for the plan of life he had marked out for himself. Resolved to pursue no inglorious career, he turned his eyes toward the East, as affording scope for his spirit of enterprise. The Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit languages engaged his attention, and I was easily induced to enter on the same studies. Idleness had ever been irksome to me, and now that I wished to fly from reflection, and hated my former studies, I felt great relief in being the fellow-pupil with my friend, and found not only instruction but consolation in the works of the orientalists. I did not, like him, attempt a critical knowledge of their dialects, for I did not contemplate making any other use of them than temporary amusement. I read merely to understand their meaning, and they well repaid my labours. Their melancholy is soothing, and their joy elevating, to a degree I never experienced in studying the authors of any other country. When you read their writings, life appears to consist in a warm sun and a garden of roses,—in the smiles and frowns of a fair enemy, and the fire that consumes your own heart. How different from the manly and heroical poetry of Greece and Rome!

Summer passed away in these occupations, and my return to Geneva was fixed for the latter end of autumn; but being delayed by several accidents, winter and snow arrived, the roads were deemed impassable, and my journey was retarded until the ensuing spring. I felt this delay very bitterly; for I longed to see my native town and my beloved friends. My return had only been delayed so long, from an unwillingness to leave Clerval in a strange place, before he had become acquainted with any of its inhabitants. The winter, however, was spent cheerfully; and although the spring was uncommonly late, when it came its beauty compensated for its dilatoriness.

The month of May had already commenced, and I expected the letter daily which was to fix the date of my departure, when Henry proposed a pedestrian tour in the environs of Ingolstadt, that I might bid a personal farewell to the country I had so long inhabited. I acceded with pleasure to this proposition: I was fond of exercise, and Clerval had always been my favourite companion in the ramble of this nature that I had taken among the scenes of my native country.

We passed a fortnight in these perambulations: my health and spirits had long been restored, and they gained additional strength from the salubrious air I breathed, the natural incidents of our progress, and the conversation of my friend. Study had before secluded me from the intercourse of my fellow-creatures, and rendered me unsocial; but Clerval called forth the better feelings of my heart; he again taught me to love the aspect of nature, and the cheerful faces of children. Excellent friend! how sincerely you did love me, and endeavour to elevate my mind until it was on a level with your own. A selfish pursuit had cramped and narrowed me, until your gentleness and affection warmed and opened my senses; I became the same happy creature who, a few years ago, loved and beloved by all, had no sorrow or care. When happy, inanimate nature had the power of bestowing on me the most delightful sensations. A serene sky and verdant fields filled me with ecstasy. The present season was indeed divine; the flowers of spring bloomed in the hedges, while those of summer were already in bud. I was undisturbed by thoughts which during the preceding year had pressed upon me, notwithstanding my endeavours to throw them off, with an invincible burden.

Henry rejoiced in my gaiety, and sincerely sympathised in my feelings: he exerted himself to amuse me, while he expressed the sensations that filled his soul. The resources of his mind on this occasion were truly

astonishing: his conversation was full of imagination; and very often, in imitation of the Persian and Arabic writers, he invented tales of wonderful fancy and passion. At other times he repeated my favourite poems, or drew me out into arguments, which he supported with great ingenuity. We returned to our college on a Sunday afternoon: the peasants were dancing, and every one we met appeared gay and happy. My own spirits were high, and I bounded along with feelings of unbridled joy and hilarity.

Chapter 7

On my return, I found the following letter from my father:—

“My dear Victor,
“You have probably waited impatiently for a letter to fix the date of your return to us; and I was at first tempted to write only a few lines, merely mentioning the day on which I should expect you. But that would be a cruel kindness, and I dare not do it. What would be your surprise, my son, when you expected a happy and glad welcome, to behold, on the contrary, tears and wretchedness? And how, Victor, can I relate our misfortune? Absence cannot have rendered you callous to our joys and griefs; and how shall I inflict pain on my long absent son? I wish to prepare you for the woeful news, but I know it is impossible; even now your eye skims over the page to seek the words which are to convey to you the horrible tidings.

“William is dead!—that sweet child, whose smiles delighted and warmed my heart, who was so gentle, yet so gay! Victor, he is murdered!

“I will not attempt to console you; but will simply relate the circumstances of the transaction.

“Last Thursday (May 7th), I, my niece, and your two brothers, went to walk in Plainpalais. The evening was warm and serene, and we prolonged our walk farther than usual. It was already dusk before we thought of returning; and then we discovered that William and Ernest, who had gone on before, were not to be found. We accordingly rested on a seat until they should return. Presently Ernest came, and enquired if we had seen his brother; he said, that he had been playing with him, that William had run away to hide himself, and that he vainly sought for him, and afterwards waited for a long time, but that he did not return.

“This account rather alarmed us, and we continued to search for him until night fell, when Elizabeth conjectured that he might have returned to the house. He was not there. We returned again, with torches; for I could not rest, when I thought that my sweet boy had lost himself, and was exposed to all the damps and dews of night; Elizabeth also suffered extreme anguish. About five in the morning I discovered my lovely boy, whom the night before I had seen blooming and active in health, stretched on the grass livid and motionless; the print of the murder’s finger was on his neck.

“He was conveyed home, and the anguish that was visible in my countenance betrayed the secret to Elizabeth. She was very earnest to see the corpse. At first I attempted to prevent her but she persisted, and entering the room where it lay, hastily examined the neck of the victim, and clasping her hands exclaimed, ‘O God! I have murdered my darling child!’

“She fainted, and was restored with extreme difficulty. When she again lived, it was only to weep and sigh. She told me, that that same evening William had teased her to let him wear a very valuable miniature that she possessed of your mother. This picture is gone, and was doubtless the temptation which urged the murderer to the deed. We have no trace of him at present, although our exertions to discover him are unremitted; but they will not restore my beloved William!

“Come, dearest Victor; you alone can console Elizabeth. She weeps continually, and accuses herself unjustly as the cause of his death; her words pierce my heart. We are all unhappy; but will not that be an additional motive for you, my son, to return and be our comforter? Your dear mother! Alas, Victor! I now say, Thank God she did not live to witness the cruel, miserable death of her youngest darling!

“Come, Victor; not brooding thoughts of vengeance against the assassin, but with feelings of peace and gentleness, that will heal, instead of festering, the wounds of our minds. Enter the house of mourning, my friend, but with kindness and affection for those who love you, and not with hatred for your enemies.

“Your affectionate and afflicted father,

“Alphonse Frankenstein.

“Geneva, May 12th, 17—.”

Clerval, who had watched my countenance as I read this letter, was surprised to observe the despair that succeeded the joy I at first expressed on receiving new from my friends. I threw the letter on the table, and covered my face with my hands.

“My dear Frankenstein,” exclaimed Henry, when he perceived me weep with bitterness, “are you always to be unhappy? My dear friend, what has happened?”

I motioned him to take up the letter, while I walked up and down the room in the extremest agitation. Tears also gushed from the eyes of Clerval, as he read the account of my misfortune.

“I can offer you no consolation, my friend,” said he; “your disaster is irreparable. What do you intend to do?”

“To go instantly to Geneva: come with me, Henry, to order the horses.”

During our walk, Clerval endeavoured to say a few words of consolation; he could only express his heartfelt sympathy. “Poor William!” said he, “dear lovely child, he now sleeps with his angel mother! Who that had seen him bright and joyous in his young beauty, but must weep over his untimely loss! To die so miserably; to feel the murderer’s grasp! How much more a murdered that could destroy radiant innocence! Poor little fellow! one only consolation have we; his friends mourn and weep, but he is at rest. The pang is over, his sufferings are at an end for ever. A sod covers his gentle form, and he knows no pain. He can no longer be a subject for pity; we must reserve that for his miserable survivors.”

Clerval spoke thus as we hurried through the streets; the words impressed themselves on my mind and I remembered them afterwards in solitude. But now, as soon as the horses arrived, I hurried into a cabriolet, and bade farewell to my friend.

My journey was very melancholy. At first I wished to hurry on, for I longed to console and sympathise with my loved and sorrowing friends; but when I drew near my native town, I slackened my progress. I could hardly sustain the multitude of feelings that crowded into my mind. I passed through scenes familiar to my youth, but which I had not seen for nearly six years. How altered every thing might be during that time! One sudden and desolating change had taken place; but a thousand little circumstances might have by degrees worked other alterations, which, although they were done more tranquilly, might not be the less decisive. Fear overcame me; I dared no advance, dreading a thousand nameless evils that made me tremble, although I was unable to define them. I remained two days at Lausanne, in this painful state of mind. I contemplated the lake: the waters were placid; all around was calm; and the snowy mountains, ‘the palaces of nature,’ were not changed. By degrees the calm and heavenly scene restored me, and I continued my journey towards Geneva.

The road ran by the side of the lake, which became narrower as I approached my native town. I discovered more distinctly the black sides of Jura, and the bright summit of Mont Blanc. I wept like a child. “Dear mountains! my own beautiful lake! how do you welcome your wanderer?

Your summits are clear; the sky and lake are blue and placid. Is this to prognosticate peace, or to mock at my unhappiness?”

I fear, my friend, that I shall render myself tedious by dwelling on these preliminary circumstances; but they were days of comparative happiness, and I think of them with pleasure. My country, my beloved country! who but a native can tell the delight I took in again beholding thy streams, thy mountains, and, more than all, thy lovely lake!

Yet, as I drew nearer home, grief and fear again overcame me. Night also closed around; and when I could hardly see the dark mountains, I felt still more gloomily. The picture appeared a vast and dim scene of evil, and I foresaw obscurely that I was destined to become the most wretched of human beings. Alas! I prophesied truly, and failed only in one single circumstance, that in all the misery I imagined and dreaded, I did not conceive the hundredth part of the anguish I was destined to endure. It was completely dark when I arrived in the environs of Geneva; the gates of the town were already shut; and I was obliged to pass the night at Secheron, a village at the distance of half a league from the city. The sky was serene; and, as I was unable to rest, I resolved to visit the spot where my poor William had been murdered. As I could not pass through the town, I was obliged to cross the lake in a boat to arrive at Plainpalais. During this short voyage I saw the lightning playing on the summit of Mont Blanc in the most beautiful figures. The storm appeared to approach rapidly, and, on landing, I ascended a low hill, that I might observe its progress. It advanced; the heavens were clouded, and I soon felt the rain coming slowly in large drops, but its violence quickly increased.

I quitted my seat, and walked on, although the darkness and storm increased every minute, and the thunder burst with a terrific crash over my head. It was echoed from Saleve, the Juras, and the Alps of Savoy; vivid flashes of lightning dazzled my eyes, illuminating the lake, making it appear like a vast sheet of fire; then for an instant every thing seemed of a pitchy darkness, until the eye recovered itself from the preceding flash. The storm, as is often the case in Switzerland, appeared at once in various parts of the heavens. The most violent storm hung exactly north of the town, over the part of the lake which lies between the promontory of Belrive and the village of Copet. Another storm enlightened Jura with faint flashes; and another darkened and sometimes disclosed the Mole, a peaked mountain to the east of the lake.

While I watched the tempest, so beautiful yet terrific, I wandered on with a hasty step. This noble war in the sky elevated my spirits; I clasped my hands, and exclaimed aloud, “William, dear angel! this is thy funeral, this thy dirge!” As I said these words, I perceived in the gloom a figure which stole from behind a clump of trees near me; I stood fixed, gazing intently: I could not be mistaken. A flash of lightning illuminated the object, and discovered its shape plainly to me; its gigantic stature, and the deformity of its aspect more hideous than belongs to humanity, instantly informed me that it was the wretch, the filthy daemon, to whom I had given life. What did he there? Could he be (I shuddered at the conception) the murderer of my brother? No sooner did that idea cross my imagination, than I became convinced of its truth; my teeth chattered, and I was forced to lean against a tree for support. The figure passed me quickly, and I lost it in the gloom.

Nothing in human shape could have destroyed the fair child. HE was the murderer! I could not doubt it. The mere presence of the idea was an irresistible proof of the fact. I thought of pursuing the devil; but it would have been in vain, for another flash discovered him to me hanging among the rocks of the nearly perpendicular ascent of Mont Saleve, a hill that bounds Plainpalais on the south. He soon reached the summit, and disappeared.

I remained motionless. The thunder ceased; but the rain still continued, and the scene was enveloped in an impenetrable darkness. I revolved in my mind the events which I had until now sought to forget: the whole train of my progress toward the creation; the appearance of the works of my own hands at my bedside; its departure. Two years had now nearly elapsed since the night on which he first received life; and was this his first crime? Alas! I had turned loose into the world a depraved wretch, whose delight was in carnage and misery; had he not murdered my brother?

No one can conceive the anguish I suffered during the remainder of the night, which I spent, cold and wet, in the open air. But I did not feel the inconvenience of the weather; my imagination was busy in scenes of evil and despair. I considered the being whom I had cast among mankind, and endowed with the will and power to effect purposes of horror, such as the deed which he had now done, nearly in the light of my own vampire, my own spirit let loose from the grave, and forced to destroy all that was dear to me.

Day dawned; and I directed my steps towards the town. The gates were open, and I hastened to my father's house. My first thought was to discover what I knew of the murderer, and cause instant pursuit to be made. But I paused when I reflected on the story that I had to tell. A being whom I myself had formed, and endued with life, had met me at midnight among the precipices of an inaccessible mountain. I remembered also the nervous fever with which I had been seized just at the time that I dated my creation, and which would give an air of delirium to a tale otherwise so utterly improbable. I well knew that if any other had communicated such a relation to me, I should have looked upon it as the ravings of insanity. Besides, the strange nature of the animal would elude all pursuit, even if I were so far credited as to persuade my relatives to commence it. And then of what use would be pursuit? Who could arrest a creature capable of scaling the overhanging sides of Mont Saleve? These reflections determined me, and I resolved to remain silent.

It was about five in the morning when I entered my father's house. I told the servants not to disturb the family, and went into the library to attend their usual hour of rising.

Six years had elapsed, passed in a dream but for one indelible trace, and I stood in the same place where I had last embraced my father before my departure for Ingolstadt. Beloved and venerable parent! He still remained to me. I gazed on the picture of my mother, which stood over the mantel-piece. It was an historical subject, painted at my father's desire, and represented Caroline Beaufort in an agony of despair, kneeling by the coffin of her dead father. Her garb was rustic, and her cheek pale; but there was an air of dignity and beauty, that hardly permitted the sentiment of pity. Below this picture was a miniature of William; and my tears flowed when I looked upon it. While I was thus engaged, Ernest entered: he had heard me arrive, and hastened to welcome me: "Welcome, my dearest Victor," said he. "Ah! I wish you had come three months ago, and then you would have found us all joyous and delighted. You come to us now to share a misery which nothing can alleviate; yet your presence will, I hope, revive our father, who seems sinking under his misfortune; and your persuasions will induce poor Elizabeth to cease her vain and tormenting self-accusations.—Poor William! he was our darling and our pride!"

Tears, unrestrained, fell from my brother's eyes; a sense of mortal agony crept over my frame. Before, I had only imagined the wretchedness of my

desolated home; the reality came on me as a new, and a not less terrible, disaster. I tried to calm Ernest; I enquired more minutely concerning my father, and here I named my cousin.

"She most of all," said Ernest, "requires consolation; she accused herself of having caused the death of my brother, and that made her very wretched. But since the murderer has been discovered—"

"The murderer discovered! Good God! how can that be? who could attempt to pursue him? It is impossible; one might as well try to overtake the winds, or confine a mountain-stream with a straw. I saw him too; he was free last night!"

"I do not know what you mean," replied my brother, in accents of wonder, "but to us the discovery we have made completes our misery. No one would believe it at first; and even now Elizabeth will not be convinced, notwithstanding all the evidence. Indeed, who would credit that Justine Moritz, who was so amiable, and fond of all the family, could suddenly become so capable of so frightful, so appalling a crime?"

"Justine Moritz! Poor, poor girl, is she the accused? But it is wrongfully; every one knows that; no one believes it, surely, Ernest?"

"No one did at first; but several circumstances came out, that have almost forced conviction upon us; and her own behaviour has been so confused, as to add to the evidence of facts a weight that, I fear, leaves no hope for doubt. But she will be tried today, and you will then hear all."

He then related that, the morning on which the murder of poor William had been discovered, Justine had been taken ill, and confined to her bed for several days. During this interval, one of the servants, happening to examine the apparel she had worn on the night of the murder, had discovered in her pocket the picture of my mother, which had been judged to be the temptation of the murderer. The servant instantly showed it to one of the others, who, without saying a word to any of the family, went to a magistrate; and, upon their deposition, Justine was apprehended. On being charged with the fact, the poor girl confirmed the suspicion in a great measure by her extreme confusion of manner.

This was a strange tale, but it did not shake my faith; and I replied earnestly, "You are all mistaken; I know the murderer. Justine, poor, good Justine, is innocent."

At that instant my father entered. I saw unhappiness deeply impressed on his countenance, but he endeavoured to welcome me cheerfully; and, after

we had exchanged our mournful greeting, would have introduced some other topic than that of our disaster, had not Ernest exclaimed, “Good God, papa! Victor says that he knows who was the murderer of poor William.”

“We do also, unfortunately,” replied my father, “for indeed I had rather have been for ever ignorant than have discovered so much depravity and ungratitude in one I valued so highly.”

“My dear father, you are mistaken; Justine is innocent.”

“If she is, God forbid that she should suffer as guilty. She is to be tried today, and I hope, I sincerely hope, that she will be acquitted.”

This speech calmed me. I was firmly convinced in my own mind that Justine, and indeed every human being, was guiltless of this murder. I had no fear, therefore, that any circumstantial evidence could be brought forward strong enough to convict her. My tale was not one to announce publicly; its astounding horror would be looked upon as madness by the vulgar. Did any one indeed exist, except I, the creator, who would believe, unless his senses convinced him, in the existence of the living monument of presumption and rash ignorance which I had let loose upon the world?

We were soon joined by Elizabeth. Time had altered her since I last beheld her; it had endowed her with loveliness surpassing the beauty of her childish years. There was the same candour, the same vivacity, but it was allied to an expression more full of sensibility and intellect. She welcomed me with the greatest affection. “Your arrival, my dear cousin,” said she, “fills me with hope. You perhaps will find some means to justify my poor guiltless Justine. Alas! who is safe, if she be convicted of crime? I rely on her innocence as certainly as I do upon my own. Our misfortune is doubly hard to us; we have not only lost that lovely darling boy, but this poor girl, whom I sincerely love, is to be torn away by even a worse fate. If she is condemned, I never shall know joy more. But she will not, I am sure she will not; and then I shall be happy again, even after the sad death of my little William.”

“She is innocent, my Elizabeth,” said I, “and that shall be proved; fear nothing, but let your spirits be cheered by the assurance of her acquittal.”

“How kind and generous you are! every one else believes in her guilt, and that made me wretched, for I knew that it was impossible: and to see every one else prejudiced in so deadly a manner rendered me hopeless and despairing.” She wept.

“Dearest niece,” said my father, “dry your tears. If she is, as you believe, innocent, rely on the justice of our laws, and the activity with which I shall prevent the slightest shadow of partiality.”

Chapter 8

We passed a few sad hours until eleven o'clock, when the trial was to commence. My father and the rest of the family being obliged to attend as witnesses, I accompanied them to the court. During the whole of this wretched mockery of justice I suffered living torture. It was to be decided whether the result of my curiosity and lawless devices would cause the death of two of my fellow beings: one a smiling babe full of innocence and joy, the other far more dreadfully murdered, with every aggravation of infamy that could make the murder memorable in horror. Justine also was a girl of merit and possessed qualities which promised to render her life happy; now all was to be obliterated in an ignominious grave, and I the cause! A thousand times rather would I have confessed myself guilty of the crime ascribed to Justine, but I was absent when it was committed, and such a declaration would have been considered as the ravings of a madman and would not have exculpated her who suffered through me.

The appearance of Justine was calm. She was dressed in mourning, and her countenance, always engaging, was rendered, by the solemnity of her feelings, exquisitely beautiful. Yet she appeared confident in innocence and did not tremble, although gazed on and execrated by thousands, for all the kindness which her beauty might otherwise have excited was obliterated in the minds of the spectators by the imagination of the enormity she was supposed to have committed. She was tranquil, yet her tranquillity was evidently constrained; and as her confusion had before been adduced as a proof of her guilt, she worked up her mind to an appearance of courage. When she entered the court she threw her eyes round it and quickly discovered where we were seated. A tear seemed to dim her eye when she saw us, but she quickly recovered herself, and a look of sorrowful affection seemed to attest her utter guiltlessness.

The trial began, and after the advocate against her had stated the charge, several witnesses were called. Several strange facts combined against her, which might have staggered anyone who had not such proof of her innocence as I had. She had been out the whole of the night on which the murder had been committed and towards morning had been perceived by a market-woman not far from the spot where the body of the murdered child had been afterwards found. The woman asked her what she did there, but

she looked very strangely and only returned a confused and unintelligible answer. She returned to the house about eight o'clock, and when one inquired where she had passed the night, she replied that she had been looking for the child and demanded earnestly if anything had been heard concerning him. When shown the body, she fell into violent hysterics and kept her bed for several days. The picture was then produced which the servant had found in her pocket; and when Elizabeth, in a faltering voice, proved that it was the same which, an hour before the child had been missed, she had placed round his neck, a murmur of horror and indignation filled the court.

Justine was called on for her defence. As the trial had proceeded, her countenance had altered. Surprise, horror, and misery were strongly expressed. Sometimes she struggled with her tears, but when she was desired to plead, she collected her powers and spoke in an audible although variable voice.

"God knows," she said, "how entirely I am innocent. But I do not pretend that my protestations should acquit me; I rest my innocence on a plain and simple explanation of the facts which have been adduced against me, and I hope the character I have always borne will incline my judges to a favourable interpretation where any circumstance appears doubtful or suspicious."

She then related that, by the permission of Elizabeth, she had passed the evening of the night on which the murder had been committed at the house of an aunt at Chene, a village situated at about a league from Geneva. On her return, at about nine o'clock, she met a man who asked her if she had seen anything of the child who was lost. She was alarmed by this account and passed several hours in looking for him, when the gates of Geneva were shut, and she was forced to remain several hours of the night in a barn belonging to a cottage, being unwilling to call up the inhabitants, to whom she was well known. Most of the night she spent here watching; towards morning she believed that she slept for a few minutes; some steps disturbed her, and she awoke. It was dawn, and she quitted her asylum, that she might again endeavour to find my brother. If she had gone near the spot where his body lay, it was without her knowledge. That she had been bewildered when questioned by the market-woman was not surprising, since she had passed a sleepless night and the fate of poor William was yet uncertain. Concerning the picture she could give no account.

“I know,” continued the unhappy victim, “how heavily and fatally this one circumstance weighs against me, but I have no power of explaining it; and when I have expressed my utter ignorance, I am only left to conjecture concerning the probabilities by which it might have been placed in my pocket. But here also I am checked. I believe that I have no enemy on earth, and none surely would have been so wicked as to destroy me wantonly. Did the murderer place it there? I know of no opportunity afforded him for so doing; or, if I had, why should he have stolen the jewel, to part with it again so soon?

“I commit my cause to the justice of my judges, yet I see no room for hope. I beg permission to have a few witnesses examined concerning my character, and if their testimony shall not overweigh my supposed guilt, I must be condemned, although I would pledge my salvation on my innocence.”

Several witnesses were called who had known her for many years, and they spoke well of her; but fear and hatred of the crime of which they supposed her guilty rendered them timorous and unwilling to come forward. Elizabeth saw even this last resource, her excellent dispositions and irreproachable conduct, about to fail the accused, when, although violently agitated, she desired permission to address the court.

“I am,” said she, “the cousin of the unhappy child who was murdered, or rather his sister, for I was educated by and have lived with his parents ever since and even long before his birth. It may therefore be judged indecent in me to come forward on this occasion, but when I see a fellow creature about to perish through the cowardice of her pretended friends, I wish to be allowed to speak, that I may say what I know of her character. I am well acquainted with the accused. I have lived in the same house with her, at one time for five and at another for nearly two years. During all that period she appeared to me the most amiable and benevolent of human creatures. She nursed Madame Frankenstein, my aunt, in her last illness, with the greatest affection and care and afterwards attended her own mother during a tedious illness, in a manner that excited the admiration of all who knew her, after which she again lived in my uncle’s house, where she was beloved by all the family. She was warmly attached to the child who is now dead and acted towards him like a most affectionate mother. For my own part, I do not hesitate to say that, notwithstanding all the evidence produced against her, I believe and rely on her perfect innocence. She had no temptation for such

an action; as to the bauble on which the chief proof rests, if she had earnestly desired it, I should have willingly given it to her, so much do I esteem and value her."

A murmur of approbation followed Elizabeth's simple and powerful appeal, but it was excited by her generous interference, and not in favour of poor Justine, on whom the public indignation was turned with renewed violence, charging her with the blackest ingratitude. She herself wept as Elizabeth spoke, but she did not answer. My own agitation and anguish was extreme during the whole trial. I believed in her innocence; I knew it. Could the demon who had (I did not for a minute doubt) murdered my brother also in his hellish sport have betrayed the innocent to death and ignominy? I could not sustain the horror of my situation, and when I perceived that the popular voice and the countenances of the judges had already condemned my unhappy victim, I rushed out of the court in agony. The tortures of the accused did not equal mine; she was sustained by innocence, but the fangs of remorse tore my bosom and would not forgo their hold.

I passed a night of unmingled wretchedness. In the morning I went to the court; my lips and throat were parched. I dared not ask the fatal question, but I was known, and the officer guessed the cause of my visit. The ballots had been thrown; they were all black, and Justine was condemned.

I cannot pretend to describe what I then felt. I had before experienced sensations of horror, and I have endeavoured to bestow upon them adequate expressions, but words cannot convey an idea of the heart-sickening despair that I then endured. The person to whom I addressed myself added that Justine had already confessed her guilt. "That evidence," he observed, "was hardly required in so glaring a case, but I am glad of it, and, indeed, none of our judges like to condemn a criminal upon circumstantial evidence, be it ever so decisive."

This was strange and unexpected intelligence; what could it mean? Had my eyes deceived me? And was I really as mad as the whole world would believe me to be if I disclosed the object of my suspicions? I hastened to return home, and Elizabeth eagerly demanded the result.

"My cousin," replied I, "it is decided as you may have expected; all judges had rather that ten innocent should suffer than that one guilty should escape. But she has confessed."

This was a dire blow to poor Elizabeth, who had relied with firmness upon Justine's innocence. "Alas!" said she. "How shall I ever again believe

in human goodness? Justine, whom I loved and esteemed as my sister, how could she put on those smiles of innocence only to betray? Her mild eyes seemed incapable of any severity or guile, and yet she has committed a murder."

Soon after we heard that the poor victim had expressed a desire to see my cousin. My father wished her not to go but said that he left it to her own judgment and feelings to decide. "Yes," said Elizabeth, "I will go, although she is guilty; and you, Victor, shall accompany me; I cannot go alone." The idea of this visit was torture to me, yet I could not refuse. We entered the gloomy prison chamber and beheld Justine sitting on some straw at the farther end; her hands were manacled, and her head rested on her knees. She rose on seeing us enter, and when we were left alone with her, she threw herself at the feet of Elizabeth, weeping bitterly. My cousin wept also.

"Oh, Justine!" said she. "Why did you rob me of my last consolation? I relied on your innocence, and although I was then very wretched, I was not so miserable as I am now."

"And do you also believe that I am so very, very wicked? Do you also join with my enemies to crush me, to condemn me as a murderer?" Her voice was suffocated with sobs.

"Rise, my poor girl," said Elizabeth; "why do you kneel, if you are innocent? I am not one of your enemies, I believed you guiltless, notwithstanding every evidence, until I heard that you had yourself declared your guilt. That report, you say, is false; and be assured, dear Justine, that nothing can shake my confidence in you for a moment, but your own confession."

"I did confess, but I confessed a lie. I confessed, that I might obtain absolution; but now that falsehood lies heavier at my heart than all my other sins. The God of heaven forgive me! Ever since I was condemned, my confessor has besieged me; he threatened and menaced, until I almost began to think that I was the monster that he said I was. He threatened excommunication and hell fire in my last moments if I continued obdurate. Dear lady, I had none to support me; all looked on me as a wretch doomed to ignominy and perdition. What could I do? In an evil hour I subscribed to a lie; and now only am I truly miserable."

She paused, weeping, and then continued, "I thought with horror, my sweet lady, that you should believe your Justine, whom your blessed aunt

had so highly honoured, and whom you loved, was a creature capable of a crime which none but the devil himself could have perpetrated. Dear William! dearest blessed child! I soon shall see you again in heaven, where we shall all be happy; and that consoles me, going as I am to suffer ignominy and death."

"Oh, Justine! Forgive me for having for one moment distrusted you. Why did you confess? But do not mourn, dear girl. Do not fear. I will proclaim, I will prove your innocence. I will melt the stony hearts of your enemies by my tears and prayers. You shall not die! You, my playfellow, my companion, my sister, perish on the scaffold! No! No! I never could survive so horrible a misfortune."

Justine shook her head mournfully. "I do not fear to die," she said; "that pang is past. God raises my weakness and gives me courage to endure the worst. I leave a sad and bitter world; and if you remember me and think of me as of one unjustly condemned, I am resigned to the fate awaiting me. Learn from me, dear lady, to submit in patience to the will of heaven!"

During this conversation I had retired to a corner of the prison room, where I could conceal the horrid anguish that possessed me. Despair! Who dared talk of that? The poor victim, who on the morrow was to pass the awful boundary between life and death, felt not, as I did, such deep and bitter agony. I gnashed my teeth and ground them together, uttering a groan that came from my inmost soul. Justine started. When she saw who it was, she approached me and said, "Dear sir, you are very kind to visit me; you, I hope, do not believe that I am guilty?"

I could not answer. "No, Justine," said Elizabeth; "he is more convinced of your innocence than I was, for even when he heard that you had confessed, he did not credit it."

"I truly thank him. In these last moments I feel the sincerest gratitude towards those who think of me with kindness. How sweet is the affection of others to such a wretch as I am! It removes more than half my misfortune, and I feel as if I could die in peace now that my innocence is acknowledged by you, dear lady, and your cousin."

Thus the poor sufferer tried to comfort others and herself. She indeed gained the resignation she desired. But I, the true murderer, felt the never-dying worm alive in my bosom, which allowed of no hope or consolation. Elizabeth also wept and was unhappy, but hers also was the misery of innocence, which, like a cloud that passes over the fair moon, for a while

hides but cannot tarnish its brightness. Anguish and despair had penetrated into the core of my heart; I bore a hell within me which nothing could extinguish. We stayed several hours with Justine, and it was with great difficulty that Elizabeth could tear herself away. “I wish,” cried she, “that I were to die with you; I cannot live in this world of misery.”

Justine assumed an air of cheerfulness, while she with difficulty repressed her bitter tears. She embraced Elizabeth and said in a voice of half-suppressed emotion, “Farewell, sweet lady, dearest Elizabeth, my beloved and only friend; may heaven, in its bounty, bless and preserve you; may this be the last misfortune that you will ever suffer! Live, and be happy, and make others so.”

And on the morrow Justine died. Elizabeth’s heart-rending eloquence failed to move the judges from their settled conviction in the criminality of the saintly sufferer. My passionate and indignant appeals were lost upon them. And when I received their cold answers and heard the harsh, unfeeling reasoning of these men, my purposed avowal died away on my lips. Thus I might proclaim myself a madman, but not revoke the sentence passed upon my wretched victim. She perished on the scaffold as a murderess!

From the tortures of my own heart, I turned to contemplate the deep and voiceless grief of my Elizabeth. This also was my doing! And my father’s woe, and the desolation of that late so smiling home all was the work of my thrice-accursed hands! Ye weep, unhappy ones, but these are not your last tears! Again shall you raise the funeral wail, and the sound of your lamentations shall again and again be heard! Frankenstein, your son, your kinsman, your early, much-loved friend; he who would spend each vital drop of blood for your sakes, who has no thought nor sense of joy except as it is mirrored also in your dear countenances, who would fill the air with blessings and spend his life in serving you—he bids you weep, to shed countless tears; happy beyond his hopes, if thus inexorable fate be satisfied, and if the destruction pause before the peace of the grave have succeeded to your sad torments!

Thus spoke my prophetic soul, as, torn by remorse, horror, and despair, I beheld those I loved spend vain sorrow upon the graves of William and Justine, the first hapless victims to my unhallowed arts.

Chapter 9

Nothing is more painful to the human mind than, after the feelings have been worked up by a quick succession of events, the dead calmness of inaction and certainty which follows and deprives the soul both of hope and fear. Justine died, she rested, and I was alive. The blood flowed freely in my veins, but a weight of despair and remorse pressed on my heart which nothing could remove. Sleep fled from my eyes; I wandered like an evil spirit, for I had committed deeds of mischief beyond description horrible, and more, much more (I persuaded myself) was yet behind. Yet my heart overflowed with kindness and the love of virtue. I had begun life with benevolent intentions and thirsted for the moment when I should put them in practice and make myself useful to my fellow beings. Now all was blasted; instead of that serenity of conscience which allowed me to look back upon the past with self-satisfaction, and from thence to gather promise of new hopes, I was seized by remorse and the sense of guilt, which hurried me away to a hell of intense tortures such as no language can describe.

This state of mind preyed upon my health, which had perhaps never entirely recovered from the first shock it had sustained. I shunned the face of man; all sound of joy or complacency was torture to me; solitude was my only consolation—deep, dark, deathlike solitude.

My father observed with pain the alteration perceptible in my disposition and habits and endeavoured by arguments deduced from the feelings of his serene conscience and guiltless life to inspire me with fortitude and awaken in me the courage to dispel the dark cloud which brooded over me. “Do you think, Victor,” said he, “that I do not suffer also? No one could love a child more than I loved your brother”—tears came into his eyes as he spoke —”but is it not a duty to the survivors that we should refrain from augmenting their unhappiness by an appearance of immoderate grief? It is also a duty owed to yourself, for excessive sorrow prevents improvement or enjoyment, or even the discharge of daily usefulness, without which no man is fit for society.”

This advice, although good, was totally inapplicable to my case; I should have been the first to hide my grief and console my friends if remorse had not mingled its bitterness, and terror its alarm, with my other sensations.

Now I could only answer my father with a look of despair and endeavour to hide myself from his view.

About this time we retired to our house at Belrive. This change was particularly agreeable to me. The shutting of the gates regularly at ten o'clock and the impossibility of remaining on the lake after that hour had rendered our residence within the walls of Geneva very irksome to me. I was now free. Often, after the rest of the family had retired for the night, I took the boat and passed many hours upon the water. Sometimes, with my sails set, I was carried by the wind; and sometimes, after rowing into the middle of the lake, I left the boat to pursue its own course and gave way to my own miserable reflections. I was often tempted, when all was at peace around me, and I the only unquiet thing that wandered restless in a scene so beautiful and heavenly—if I except some bat, or the frogs, whose harsh and interrupted croaking was heard only when I approached the shore—often, I say, I was tempted to plunge into the silent lake, that the waters might close over me and my calamities forever. But I was restrained, when I thought of the heroic and suffering Elizabeth, whom I tenderly loved, and whose existence was bound up in mine. I thought also of my father and surviving brother; should I by my base desertion leave them exposed and unprotected to the malice of the fiend whom I had let loose among them?

At these moments I wept bitterly and wished that peace would revisit my mind only that I might afford them consolation and happiness. But that could not be. Remorse extinguished every hope. I had been the author of unalterable evils, and I lived in daily fear lest the monster whom I had created should perpetrate some new wickedness. I had an obscure feeling that all was not over and that he would still commit some signal crime, which by its enormity should almost efface the recollection of the past. There was always scope for fear so long as anything I loved remained behind. My abhorrence of this fiend cannot be conceived. When I thought of him I gnashed my teeth, my eyes became inflamed, and I ardently wished to extinguish that life which I had so thoughtlessly bestowed. When I reflected on his crimes and malice, my hatred and revenge burst all bounds of moderation. I would have made a pilgrimage to the highest peak of the Andes, could I when there have precipitated him to their base. I wished to see him again, that I might wreak the utmost extent of abhorrence on his head and avenge the deaths of William and Justine. Our house was the house of mourning. My father's health was deeply shaken by the horror of

the recent events. Elizabeth was sad and desponding; she no longer took delight in her ordinary occupations; all pleasure seemed to her sacrilege toward the dead; eternal woe and tears she then thought was the just tribute she should pay to innocence so blasted and destroyed. She was no longer that happy creature who in earlier youth wandered with me on the banks of the lake and talked with ecstasy of our future prospects. The first of those sorrows which are sent to wean us from the earth had visited her, and its dimming influence quenched her dearest smiles.

"When I reflect, my dear cousin," said she, "on the miserable death of Justine Moritz, I no longer see the world and its works as they before appeared to me. Before, I looked upon the accounts of vice and injustice that I read in books or heard from others as tales of ancient days or imaginary evils; at least they were remote and more familiar to reason than to the imagination; but now misery has come home, and men appear to me as monsters thirsting for each other's blood. Yet I am certainly unjust. Everybody believed that poor girl to be guilty; and if she could have committed the crime for which she suffered, assuredly she would have been the most depraved of human creatures. For the sake of a few jewels, to have murdered the son of her benefactor and friend, a child whom she had nursed from its birth, and appeared to love as if it had been her own! I could not consent to the death of any human being, but certainly I should have thought such a creature unfit to remain in the society of men. But she was innocent. I know, I feel she was innocent; you are of the same opinion, and that confirms me. Alas! Victor, when falsehood can look so like the truth, who can assure themselves of certain happiness? I feel as if I were walking on the edge of a precipice, towards which thousands are crowding and endeavouring to plunge me into the abyss. William and Justine were assassinated, and the murderer escapes; he walks about the world free, and perhaps respected. But even if I were condemned to suffer on the scaffold for the same crimes, I would not change places with such a wretch."

I listened to this discourse with the extremest agony. I, not in deed, but in effect, was the true murderer. Elizabeth read my anguish in my countenance, and kindly taking my hand, said, "My dearest friend, you must calm yourself. These events have affected me, God knows how deeply; but I am not so wretched as you are. There is an expression of despair, and sometimes of revenge, in your countenance that makes me tremble. Dear Victor, banish these dark passions. Remember the friends

around you, who centre all their hopes in you. Have we lost the power of rendering you happy? Ah! While we love, while we are true to each other, here in this land of peace and beauty, your native country, we may reap every tranquil blessing—what can disturb our peace?"

And could not such words from her whom I fondly prized before every other gift of fortune suffice to chase away the fiend that lurked in my heart? Even as she spoke I drew near to her, as if in terror, lest at that very moment the destroyer had been near to rob me of her.

Thus not the tenderness of friendship, nor the beauty of earth, nor of heaven, could redeem my soul from woe; the very accents of love were ineffectual. I was encompassed by a cloud which no beneficial influence could penetrate. The wounded deer dragging its fainting limbs to some untrodden brake, there to gaze upon the arrow which had pierced it, and to die, was but a type of me.

Sometimes I could cope with the sullen despair that overwhelmed me, but sometimes the whirlwind passions of my soul drove me to seek, by bodily exercise and by change of place, some relief from my intolerable sensations. It was during an access of this kind that I suddenly left my home, and bending my steps towards the near Alpine valleys, sought in the magnificence, the eternity of such scenes, to forget myself and my ephemeral, because human, sorrows. My wanderings were directed towards the valley of Chamounix. I had visited it frequently during my boyhood. Six years had passed since then: _I_ was a wreck, but nought had changed in those savage and enduring scenes.

I performed the first part of my journey on horseback. I afterwards hired a mule, as the more sure-footed and least liable to receive injury on these rugged roads. The weather was fine; it was about the middle of the month of August, nearly two months after the death of Justine, that miserable epoch from which I dated all my woe. The weight upon my spirit was sensibly lightened as I plunged yet deeper in the ravine of Arve. The immense mountains and precipices that overhung me on every side, the sound of the river raging among the rocks, and the dashing of the waterfalls around spoke of a power mighty as Omnipotence—and I ceased to fear or to bend before any being less almighty than that which had created and ruled the elements, here displayed in their most terrific guise. Still, as I ascended higher, the valley assumed a more magnificent and astonishing character. Ruined castles hanging on the precipices of piny mountains, the impetuous

Arve, and cottages every here and there peeping forth from among the trees formed a scene of singular beauty. But it was augmented and rendered sublime by the mighty Alps, whose white and shining pyramids and domes towered above all, as belonging to another earth, the habitations of another race of beings.

I passed the bridge of Pelissier, where the ravine, which the river forms, opened before me, and I began to ascend the mountain that overhangs it. Soon after, I entered the valley of Chamounix. This valley is more wonderful and sublime, but not so beautiful and picturesque as that of Servox, through which I had just passed. The high and snowy mountains were its immediate boundaries, but I saw no more ruined castles and fertile fields. Immense glaciers approached the road; I heard the rumbling thunder of the falling avalanche and marked the smoke of its passage. Mont Blanc, the supreme and magnificent Mont Blanc, raised itself from the surrounding aiguilles, and its tremendous dome overlooked the valley.

A tingling long-lost sense of pleasure often came across me during this journey. Some turn in the road, some new object suddenly perceived and recognized, reminded me of days gone by, and were associated with the lighthearted gaiety of boyhood. The very winds whispered in soothing accents, and maternal Nature bade me weep no more. Then again the kindly influence ceased to act—I found myself fettered again to grief and indulging in all the misery of reflection. Then I spurred on my animal, striving so to forget the world, my fears, and more than all, myself—or, in a more desperate fashion, I alighted and threw myself on the grass, weighed down by horror and despair.

At length I arrived at the village of Chamounix. Exhaustion succeeded to the extreme fatigue both of body and of mind which I had endured. For a short space of time I remained at the window watching the pallid lightnings that played above Mont Blanc and listening to the rushing of the Arve, which pursued its noisy way beneath. The same lulling sounds acted as a lullaby to my too keen sensations; when I placed my head upon my pillow, sleep crept over me; I felt it as it came and blessed the giver of oblivion.

Chapter 10

I spent the following day roaming through the valley. I stood beside the sources of the Arveiron, which take their rise in a glacier, that with slow pace is advancing down from the summit of the hills to barricade the valley. The abrupt sides of vast mountains were before me; the icy wall of the glacier overhung me; a few shattered pines were scattered around; and the solemn silence of this glorious presence-chamber of imperial nature was broken only by the brawling waves or the fall of some vast fragment, the thunder sound of the avalanche or the cracking, reverberated along the mountains, of the accumulated ice, which, through the silent working of immutable laws, was ever and anon rent and torn, as if it had been but a plaything in their hands. These sublime and magnificent scenes afforded me the greatest consolation that I was capable of receiving. They elevated me from all littleness of feeling, and although they did not remove my grief, they subdued and tranquillized it. In some degree, also, they diverted my mind from the thoughts over which it had brooded for the last month. I retired to rest at night; my slumbers, as it were, waited on and ministered to by the assemblance of grand shapes which I had contemplated during the day. They congregated round me; the unstained snowy mountain-top, the glittering pinnacle, the pine woods, and ragged bare ravine, the eagle, soaring amidst the clouds—they all gathered round me and bade me be at peace.

Where had they fled when the next morning I awoke? All of soul-inspiriting fled with sleep, and dark melancholy clouded every thought. The rain was pouring in torrents, and thick mists hid the summits of the mountains, so that I even saw not the faces of those mighty friends. Still I would penetrate their misty veil and seek them in their cloudy retreats. What were rain and storm to me? My mule was brought to the door, and I resolved to ascend to the summit of Montanvert. I remembered the effect that the view of the tremendous and ever-moving glacier had produced upon my mind when I first saw it. It had then filled me with a sublime ecstasy that gave wings to the soul and allowed it to soar from the obscure world to light and joy. The sight of the awful and majestic in nature had indeed always the effect of solemnizing my mind and causing me to forget the passing cares of life. I determined to go without a guide, for I was well

acquainted with the path, and the presence of another would destroy the solitary grandeur of the scene.

The ascent is precipitous, but the path is cut into continual and short windings, which enable you to surmount the perpendicularity of the mountain. It is a scene terrifically desolate. In a thousand spots the traces of the winter avalanche may be perceived, where trees lie broken and strewed on the ground, some entirely destroyed, others bent, leaning upon the jutting rocks of the mountain or transversely upon other trees. The path, as you ascend higher, is intersected by ravines of snow, down which stones continually roll from above; one of them is particularly dangerous, as the slightest sound, such as even speaking in a loud voice, produces a concussion of air sufficient to draw destruction upon the head of the speaker. The pines are not tall or luxuriant, but they are sombre and add an air of severity to the scene. I looked on the valley beneath; vast mists were rising from the rivers which ran through it and curling in thick wreaths around the opposite mountains, whose summits were hid in the uniform clouds, while rain poured from the dark sky and added to the melancholy impression I received from the objects around me. Alas! Why does man boast of sensibilities superior to those apparent in the brute; it only renders them more necessary beings. If our impulses were confined to hunger, thirst, and desire, we might be nearly free; but now we are moved by every wind that blows and a chance word or scene that that word may convey to us.

We rest; a dream has power to poison sleep.
We rise; one wand'ring thought pollutes the day.
We feel, conceive, or reason; laugh or weep,
Embrace fond woe, or cast our cares away;
It is the same: for, be it joy or sorrow,
The path of its departure still is free.
Man's yesterday may ne'er be like his morrow;
Nought may endure but mutability!

It was nearly noon when I arrived at the top of the ascent. For some time I sat upon the rock that overlooks the sea of ice. A mist covered both that and the surrounding mountains. Presently a breeze dissipated the cloud, and I descended upon the glacier. The surface is very uneven, rising like the

waves of a troubled sea, descending low, and interspersed by rifts that sink deep. The field of ice is almost a league in width, but I spent nearly two hours in crossing it. The opposite mountain is a bare perpendicular rock. From the side where I now stood Montanvert was exactly opposite, at the distance of a league; and above it rose Mont Blanc, in awful majesty. I remained in a recess of the rock, gazing on this wonderful and stupendous scene. The sea, or rather the vast river of ice, wound among its dependent mountains, whose aerial summits hung over its recesses. Their icy and glittering peaks shone in the sunlight over the clouds. My heart, which was before sorrowful, now swelled with something like joy; I exclaimed, "Wandering spirits, if indeed ye wander, and do not rest in your narrow beds, allow me this faint happiness, or take me, as your companion, away from the joys of life."

As I said this I suddenly beheld the figure of a man, at some distance, advancing towards me with superhuman speed. He bounded over the crevices in the ice, among which I had walked with caution; his stature, also, as he approached, seemed to exceed that of man. I was troubled; a mist came over my eyes, and I felt a faintness seize me, but I was quickly restored by the cold gale of the mountains. I perceived, as the shape came nearer (sight tremendous and abhorred!) that it was the wretch whom I had created. I trembled with rage and horror, resolving to wait his approach and then close with him in mortal combat. He approached; his countenance bespoke bitter anguish, combined with disdain and malignity, while its unearthly ugliness rendered it almost too horrible for human eyes. But I scarcely observed this; rage and hatred had at first deprived me of utterance, and I recovered only to overwhelm him with words expressive of furious detestation and contempt.

"Devil," I exclaimed, "do you dare approach me? And do not you fear the fierce vengeance of my arm wreaked on your miserable head? Begone, vile insect! Or rather, stay, that I may trample you to dust! And, oh! That I could, with the extinction of your miserable existence, restore those victims whom you have so diabolically murdered!"

"I expected this reception," said the daemon. "All men hate the wretched; how, then, must I be hated, who am miserable beyond all living things! Yet you, my creator, detest and spurn me, thy creature, to whom thou art bound by ties only dissoluble by the annihilation of one of us. You purpose to kill me. How dare you sport thus with life? Do your duty

towards me, and I will do mine towards you and the rest of mankind. If you will comply with my conditions, I will leave them and you at peace; but if you refuse, I will glut the maw of death, until it be satiated with the blood of your remaining friends."

"Abhorred monster! Fiend that thou art! The tortures of hell are too mild a vengeance for thy crimes. Wretched devil! You reproach me with your creation, come on, then, that I may extinguish the spark which I so negligently bestowed."

My rage was without bounds; I sprang on him, impelled by all the feelings which can arm one being against the existence of another.

He easily eluded me and said,

"Be calm! I entreat you to hear me before you give vent to your hatred on my devoted head. Have I not suffered enough, that you seek to increase my misery? Life, although it may only be an accumulation of anguish, is dear to me, and I will defend it. Remember, thou hast made me more powerful than thyself; my height is superior to thine, my joints more supple. But I will not be tempted to set myself in opposition to thee. I am thy creature, and I will be even mild and docile to my natural lord and king if thou wilt also perform thy part, the which thou owest me. Oh, Frankenstein, be not equitable to every other and trample upon me alone, to whom thy justice, and even thy clemency and affection, is most due. Remember that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous."

"Begone! I will not hear you. There can be no community between you and me; we are enemies. Begone, or let us try our strength in a fight, in which one must fall."

"How can I move thee? Will no entreaties cause thee to turn a favourable eye upon thy creature, who implores thy goodness and compassion? Believe me, Frankenstein, I was benevolent; my soul glowed with love and humanity; but am I not alone, miserably alone? You, my creator, abhor me; what hope can I gather from your fellow creatures, who owe me nothing? They spurn and hate me. The desert mountains and dreary glaciers are my refuge. I have wandered here many days; the caves of ice, which I only do not fear, are a dwelling to me, and the only one which man does not grudge. These bleak skies I hail, for they are kinder to me than your fellow beings.

If the multitude of mankind knew of my existence, they would do as you do, and arm themselves for my destruction. Shall I not then hate them who abhor me? I will keep no terms with my enemies. I am miserable, and they shall share my wretchedness. Yet it is in your power to recompense me, and deliver them from an evil which it only remains for you to make so great, that not only you and your family, but thousands of others, shall be swallowed up in the whirlwinds of its rage. Let your compassion be moved, and do not disdain me. Listen to my tale; when you have heard that, abandon or commiserate me, as you shall judge that I deserve. But hear me. The guilty are allowed, by human laws, bloody as they are, to speak in their own defence before they are condemned. Listen to me, Frankenstein. You accuse me of murder, and yet you would, with a satisfied conscience, destroy your own creature. Oh, praise the eternal justice of man! Yet I ask you not to spare me; listen to me, and then, if you can, and if you will, destroy the work of your hands."

"Why do you call to my remembrance," I rejoined, "circumstances of which I shudder to reflect, that I have been the miserable origin and author? Cursed be the day, abhorred devil, in which you first saw light! Cursed (although I curse myself) be the hands that formed you! You have made me wretched beyond expression. You have left me no power to consider whether I am just to you or not. Begone! Relieve me from the sight of your detested form."

"Thus I relieve thee, my creator," he said, and placed his hated hands before my eyes, which I flung from me with violence; "thus I take from thee a sight which you abhor. Still thou canst listen to me and grant me thy compassion. By the virtues that I once possessed, I demand this from you. Hear my tale; it is long and strange, and the temperature of this place is not fitting to your fine sensations; come to the hut upon the mountain. The sun is yet high in the heavens; before it descends to hide itself behind your snowy precipices and illuminate another world, you will have heard my story and can decide. On you it rests, whether I quit forever the neighbourhood of man and lead a harmless life, or become the scourge of your fellow creatures and the author of your own speedy ruin."

As he said this he led the way across the ice; I followed. My heart was full, and I did not answer him, but as I proceeded, I weighed the various arguments that he had used and determined at least to listen to his tale. I was partly urged by curiosity, and compassion confirmed my resolution. I

had hitherto supposed him to be the murderer of my brother, and I eagerly sought a confirmation or denial of this opinion. For the first time, also, I felt what the duties of a creator towards his creature were, and that I ought to render him happy before I complained of his wickedness. These motives urged me to comply with his demand. We crossed the ice, therefore, and ascended the opposite rock. The air was cold, and the rain again began to descend; we entered the hut, the fiend with an air of exultation, I with a heavy heart and depressed spirits. But I consented to listen, and seating myself by the fire which my odious companion had lighted, he thus began his tale.

Chapter 11

“It is with considerable difficulty that I remember the original era of my being; all the events of that period appear confused and indistinct. A strange multiplicity of sensations seized me, and I saw, felt, heard, and smelt at the same time; and it was, indeed, a long time before I learned to distinguish between the operations of my various senses. By degrees, I remember, a stronger light pressed upon my nerves, so that I was obliged to shut my eyes. Darkness then came over me and troubled me, but hardly had I felt this when, by opening my eyes, as I now suppose, the light poured in upon me again. I walked and, I believe, descended, but I presently found a great alteration in my sensations. Before, dark and opaque bodies had surrounded me, impervious to my touch or sight; but I now found that I could wander on at liberty, with no obstacles which I could not either surmount or avoid. The light became more and more oppressive to me, and the heat wearying me as I walked, I sought a place where I could receive shade. This was the forest near Ingolstadt; and here I lay by the side of a brook resting from my fatigue, until I felt tormented by hunger and thirst. This roused me from my nearly dormant state, and I ate some berries which I found hanging on the trees or lying on the ground. I slaked my thirst at the brook, and then lying down, was overcome by sleep.

“It was dark when I awoke; I felt cold also, and half frightened, as it were, instinctively, finding myself so desolate. Before I had quitted your apartment, on a sensation of cold, I had covered myself with some clothes, but these were insufficient to secure me from the dews of night. I was a poor, helpless, miserable wretch; I knew, and could distinguish, nothing; but feeling pain invade me on all sides, I sat down and wept.

“Soon a gentle light stole over the heavens and gave me a sensation of pleasure. I started up and beheld a radiant form rise from among the trees. [The moon] I gazed with a kind of wonder. It moved slowly, but it enlightened my path, and I again went out in search of berries. I was still cold when under one of the trees I found a huge cloak, with which I covered myself, and sat down upon the ground. No distinct ideas occupied my mind; all was confused. I felt light, and hunger, and thirst, and darkness; innumerable sounds rang in my ears, and on all sides various scents saluted

me; the only object that I could distinguish was the bright moon, and I fixed my eyes on that with pleasure.

"Several changes of day and night passed, and the orb of night had greatly lessened, when I began to distinguish my sensations from each other. I gradually saw plainly the clear stream that supplied me with drink and the trees that shaded me with their foliage. I was delighted when I first discovered that a pleasant sound, which often saluted my ears, proceeded from the throats of the little winged animals who had often intercepted the light from my eyes. I began also to observe, with greater accuracy, the forms that surrounded me and to perceive the boundaries of the radiant roof of light which canopied me. Sometimes I tried to imitate the pleasant songs of the birds but was unable. Sometimes I wished to express my sensations in my own mode, but the uncouth and inarticulate sounds which broke from me frightened me into silence again.

"The moon had disappeared from the night, and again, with a lessened form, showed itself, while I still remained in the forest. My sensations had by this time become distinct, and my mind received every day additional ideas. My eyes became accustomed to the light and to perceive objects in their right forms; I distinguished the insect from the herb, and by degrees, one herb from another. I found that the sparrow uttered none but harsh notes, whilst those of the blackbird and thrush were sweet and enticing.

"One day, when I was oppressed by cold, I found a fire which had been left by some wandering beggars, and was overcome with delight at the warmth I experienced from it. In my joy I thrust my hand into the live embers, but quickly drew it out again with a cry of pain. How strange, I thought, that the same cause should produce such opposite effects! I examined the materials of the fire, and to my joy found it to be composed of wood. I quickly collected some branches, but they were wet and would not burn. I was pained at this and sat still watching the operation of the fire. The wet wood which I had placed near the heat dried and itself became inflamed. I reflected on this, and by touching the various branches, I discovered the cause and busied myself in collecting a great quantity of wood, that I might dry it and have a plentiful supply of fire. When night came on and brought sleep with it, I was in the greatest fear lest my fire should be extinguished. I covered it carefully with dry wood and leaves and placed wet branches upon it; and then, spreading my cloak, I lay on the ground and sank into sleep.

“It was morning when I awoke, and my first care was to visit the fire. I uncovered it, and a gentle breeze quickly fanned it into a flame. I observed this also and contrived a fan of branches, which roused the embers when they were nearly extinguished. When night came again I found, with pleasure, that the fire gave light as well as heat and that the discovery of this element was useful to me in my food, for I found some of the offals that the travellers had left had been roasted, and tasted much more savoury than the berries I gathered from the trees. I tried, therefore, to dress my food in the same manner, placing it on the live embers. I found that the berries were spoiled by this operation, and the nuts and roots much improved.

“Food, however, became scarce, and I often spent the whole day searching in vain for a few acorns to assuage the pangs of hunger. When I found this, I resolved to quit the place that I had hitherto inhabited, to seek for one where the few wants I experienced would be more easily satisfied. In this emigration I exceedingly lamented the loss of the fire which I had obtained through accident and knew not how to reproduce it. I gave several hours to the serious consideration of this difficulty, but I was obliged to relinquish all attempt to supply it, and wrapping myself up in my cloak, I struck across the wood towards the setting sun. I passed three days in these rambles and at length discovered the open country. A great fall of snow had taken place the night before, and the fields were of one uniform white; the appearance was disconsolate, and I found my feet chilled by the cold damp substance that covered the ground.

“It was about seven in the morning, and I longed to obtain food and shelter; at length I perceived a small hut, on a rising ground, which had doubtless been built for the convenience of some shepherd. This was a new sight to me, and I examined the structure with great curiosity. Finding the door open, I entered. An old man sat in it, near a fire, over which he was preparing his breakfast. He turned on hearing a noise, and perceiving me, shrieked loudly, and quitting the hut, ran across the fields with a speed of which his debilitated form hardly appeared capable. His appearance, different from any I had ever before seen, and his flight somewhat surprised me. But I was enchanted by the appearance of the hut; here the snow and rain could not penetrate; the ground was dry; and it presented to me then as exquisite and divine a retreat as Pandemonium appeared to the demons of hell after their sufferings in the lake of fire. I greedily devoured the remnants of the shepherd’s breakfast, which consisted of bread, cheese,

milk, and wine; the latter, however, I did not like. Then, overcome by fatigue, I lay down among some straw and fell asleep.

"It was noon when I awoke, and allured by the warmth of the sun, which shone brightly on the white ground, I determined to recommence my travels; and, depositing the remains of the peasant's breakfast in a wallet I found, I proceeded across the fields for several hours, until at sunset I arrived at a village. How miraculous did this appear! The huts, the neater cottages, and stately houses engaged my admiration by turns. The vegetables in the gardens, the milk and cheese that I saw placed at the windows of some of the cottages, allured my appetite. One of the best of these I entered, but I had hardly placed my foot within the door before the children shrieked, and one of the women fainted. The whole village was roused; some fled, some attacked me, until, grievously bruised by stones and many other kinds of missile weapons, I escaped to the open country and fearfully took refuge in a low hovel, quite bare, and making a wretched appearance after the palaces I had beheld in the village. This hovel however, joined a cottage of a neat and pleasant appearance, but after my late dearly bought experience, I dared not enter it. My place of refuge was constructed of wood, but so low that I could with difficulty sit upright in it. No wood, however, was placed on the earth, which formed the floor, but it was dry; and although the wind entered it by innumerable chinks, I found it an agreeable asylum from the snow and rain.

"Here, then, I retreated and lay down happy to have found a shelter, however miserable, from the inclemency of the season, and still more from the barbarity of man. As soon as morning dawned I crept from my kennel, that I might view the adjacent cottage and discover if I could remain in the habitation I had found. It was situated against the back of the cottage and surrounded on the sides which were exposed by a pig sty and a clear pool of water. One part was open, and by that I had crept in; but now I covered every crevice by which I might be perceived with stones and wood, yet in such a manner that I might move them on occasion to pass out; all the light I enjoyed came through the sty, and that was sufficient for me.

"Having thus arranged my dwelling and carpeted it with clean straw, I retired, for I saw the figure of a man at a distance, and I remembered too well my treatment the night before to trust myself in his power. I had first, however, provided for my sustenance for that day by a loaf of coarse bread, which I purloined, and a cup with which I could drink more conveniently

than from my hand of the pure water which flowed by my retreat. The floor was a little raised, so that it was kept perfectly dry, and by its vicinity to the chimney of the cottage it was tolerably warm.

"Being thus provided, I resolved to reside in this hovel until something should occur which might alter my determination. It was indeed a paradise compared to the bleak forest, my former residence, the rain-dropping branches, and dank earth. I ate my breakfast with pleasure and was about to remove a plank to procure myself a little water when I heard a step, and looking through a small chink, I beheld a young creature, with a pail on her head, passing before my hovel. The girl was young and of gentle demeanour, unlike what I have since found cottagers and farmhouse servants to be. Yet she was meanly dressed, a coarse blue petticoat and a linen jacket being her only garb; her fair hair was plaited but not adorned: she looked patient yet sad. I lost sight of her, and in about a quarter of an hour she returned bearing the pail, which was now partly filled with milk. As she walked along, seemingly incommoded by the burden, a young man met her, whose countenance expressed a deeper despondence. Uttering a few sounds with an air of melancholy, he took the pail from her head and bore it to the cottage himself. She followed, and they disappeared. Presently I saw the young man again, with some tools in his hand, cross the field behind the cottage; and the girl was also busied, sometimes in the house and sometimes in the yard.

"On examining my dwelling, I found that one of the windows of the cottage had formerly occupied a part of it, but the panes had been filled up with wood. In one of these was a small and almost imperceptible chink through which the eye could just penetrate. Through this crevice a small room was visible, whitewashed and clean but very bare of furniture. In one corner, near a small fire, sat an old man, leaning his head on his hands in a disconsolate attitude. The young girl was occupied in arranging the cottage; but presently she took something out of a drawer, which employed her hands, and she sat down beside the old man, who, taking up an instrument, began to play and to produce sounds sweeter than the voice of the thrush or the nightingale. It was a lovely sight, even to me, poor wretch who had never beheld aught beautiful before. The silver hair and benevolent countenance of the aged cottager won my reverence, while the gentle manners of the girl enticed my love. He played a sweet mournful air which I perceived drew tears from the eyes of his amiable companion, of which

the old man took no notice, until she sobbed audibly; he then pronounced a few sounds, and the fair creature, leaving her work, knelt at his feet. He raised her and smiled with such kindness and affection that I felt sensations of a peculiar and overpowering nature; they were a mixture of pain and pleasure, such as I had never before experienced, either from hunger or cold, warmth or food; and I withdrew from the window, unable to bear these emotions.

"Soon after this the young man returned, bearing on his shoulders a load of wood. The girl met him at the door, helped to relieve him of his burden, and taking some of the fuel into the cottage, placed it on the fire; then she and the youth went apart into a nook of the cottage, and he showed her a large loaf and a piece of cheese. She seemed pleased and went into the garden for some roots and plants, which she placed in water, and then upon the fire. She afterwards continued her work, whilst the young man went into the garden and appeared busily employed in digging and pulling up roots. After he had been employed thus about an hour, the young woman joined him and they entered the cottage together.

"The old man had, in the meantime, been pensive, but on the appearance of his companions he assumed a more cheerful air, and they sat down to eat. The meal was quickly dispatched. The young woman was again occupied in arranging the cottage, the old man walked before the cottage in the sun for a few minutes, leaning on the arm of the youth. Nothing could exceed in beauty the contrast between these two excellent creatures. One was old, with silver hairs and a countenance beaming with benevolence and love; the younger was slight and graceful in his figure, and his features were moulded with the finest symmetry, yet his eyes and attitude expressed the utmost sadness and despondency. The old man returned to the cottage, and the youth, with tools different from those he had used in the morning, directed his steps across the fields.

"Night quickly shut in, but to my extreme wonder, I found that the cottagers had a means of prolonging light by the use of tapers, and was delighted to find that the setting of the sun did not put an end to the pleasure I experienced in watching my human neighbours. In the evening the young girl and her companion were employed in various occupations which I did not understand; and the old man again took up the instrument which produced the divine sounds that had enchanted me in the morning. So soon as he had finished, the youth began, not to play, but to utter sounds that

were monotonous, and neither resembling the harmony of the old man's instrument nor the songs of the birds; I since found that he read aloud, but at that time I knew nothing of the science of words or letters.

"The family, after having been thus occupied for a short time, extinguished their lights and retired, as I conjectured, to rest."

Chapter 12

“I lay on my straw, but I could not sleep. I thought of the occurrences of the day. What chiefly struck me was the gentle manners of these people, and I longed to join them, but dared not. I remembered too well the treatment I had suffered the night before from the barbarous villagers, and resolved, whatever course of conduct I might hereafter think it right to pursue, that for the present I would remain quietly in my hovel, watching and endeavouring to discover the motives which influenced their actions.

“The cottagers arose the next morning before the sun. The young woman arranged the cottage and prepared the food, and the youth departed after the first meal.

“This day was passed in the same routine as that which preceded it. The young man was constantly employed out of doors, and the girl in various laborious occupations within. The old man, whom I soon perceived to be blind, employed his leisure hours on his instrument or in contemplation. Nothing could exceed the love and respect which the younger cottagers exhibited towards their venerable companion. They performed towards him every little office of affection and duty with gentleness, and he rewarded them by his benevolent smiles.

“They were not entirely happy. The young man and his companion often went apart and appeared to weep. I saw no cause for their unhappiness, but I was deeply affected by it. If such lovely creatures were miserable, it was less strange that I, an imperfect and solitary being, should be wretched. Yet why were these gentle beings unhappy? They possessed a delightful house (for such it was in my eyes) and every luxury; they had a fire to warm them when chill and delicious viands when hungry; they were dressed in excellent clothes; and, still more, they enjoyed one another’s company and speech, interchanging each day looks of affection and kindness. What did their tears imply? Did they really express pain? I was at first unable to solve these questions, but perpetual attention and time explained to me many appearances which were at first enigmatic.

“A considerable period elapsed before I discovered one of the causes of the uneasiness of this amiable family: it was poverty, and they suffered that evil in a very distressing degree. Their nourishment consisted entirely of the vegetables of their garden and the milk of one cow, which gave very little

during the winter, when its masters could scarcely procure food to support it. They often, I believe, suffered the pangs of hunger very poignantly, especially the two younger cottagers, for several times they placed food before the old man when they reserved none for themselves.

"This trait of kindness moved me sensibly. I had been accustomed, during the night, to steal a part of their store for my own consumption, but when I found that in doing this I inflicted pain on the cottagers, I abstained and satisfied myself with berries, nuts, and roots which I gathered from a neighbouring wood.

"I discovered also another means through which I was enabled to assist their labours. I found that the youth spent a great part of each day in collecting wood for the family fire, and during the night I often took his tools, the use of which I quickly discovered, and brought home firing sufficient for the consumption of several days.

"I remember, the first time that I did this, the young woman, when she opened the door in the morning, appeared greatly astonished on seeing a great pile of wood on the outside. She uttered some words in a loud voice, and the youth joined her, who also expressed surprise. I observed, with pleasure, that he did not go to the forest that day, but spent it in repairing the cottage and cultivating the garden.

"By degrees I made a discovery of still greater moment. I found that these people possessed a method of communicating their experience and feelings to one another by articulate sounds. I perceived that the words they spoke sometimes produced pleasure or pain, smiles or sadness, in the minds and countenances of the hearers. This was indeed a godlike science, and I ardently desired to become acquainted with it. But I was baffled in every attempt I made for this purpose. Their pronunciation was quick, and the words they uttered, not having any apparent connection with visible objects, I was unable to discover any clue by which I could unravel the mystery of their reference. By great application, however, and after having remained during the space of several revolutions of the moon in my hovel, I discovered the names that were given to some of the most familiar objects of discourse; I learned and applied the words, 'fire,' 'milk,' 'bread,' and 'wood.' I learned also the names of the cottagers themselves. The youth and his companion had each of them several names, but the old man had only one, which was 'father.' The girl was called 'sister' or 'Agatha,' and the youth 'Felix,' 'brother,' or 'son.' I cannot describe the delight I felt when I

learned the ideas appropriated to each of these sounds and was able to pronounce them. I distinguished several other words without being able as yet to understand or apply them, such as ‘good,’ ‘dearest,’ ‘unhappy.’

“I spent the winter in this manner. The gentle manners and beauty of the cottagers greatly endeared them to me; when they were unhappy, I felt depressed; when they rejoiced, I sympathized in their joys. I saw few human beings besides them, and if any other happened to enter the cottage, their harsh manners and rude gait only enhanced to me the superior accomplishments of my friends. The old man, I could perceive, often endeavoured to encourage his children, as sometimes I found that he called them, to cast off their melancholy. He would talk in a cheerful accent, with an expression of goodness that bestowed pleasure even upon me. Agatha listened with respect, her eyes sometimes filled with tears, which she endeavoured to wipe away unperceived; but I generally found that her countenance and tone were more cheerful after having listened to the exhortations of her father. It was not thus with Felix. He was always the saddest of the group, and even to my unpractised senses, he appeared to have suffered more deeply than his friends. But if his countenance was more sorrowful, his voice was more cheerful than that of his sister, especially when he addressed the old man.

“I could mention innumerable instances which, although slight, marked the dispositions of these amiable cottagers. In the midst of poverty and want, Felix carried with pleasure to his sister the first little white flower that peeped out from beneath the snowy ground. Early in the morning, before she had risen, he cleared away the snow that obstructed her path to the milk-house, drew water from the well, and brought the wood from the outhouse, where, to his perpetual astonishment, he found his store always replenished by an invisible hand. In the day, I believe, he worked sometimes for a neighbouring farmer, because he often went forth and did not return until dinner, yet brought no wood with him. At other times he worked in the garden, but as there was little to do in the frosty season, he read to the old man and Agatha.

“This reading had puzzled me extremely at first, but by degrees I discovered that he uttered many of the same sounds when he read as when he talked. I conjectured, therefore, that he found on the paper signs for speech which he understood, and I ardently longed to comprehend these also; but how was that possible when I did not even understand the sounds

for which they stood as signs? I improved, however, sensibly in this science, but not sufficiently to follow up any kind of conversation, although I applied my whole mind to the endeavour, for I easily perceived that, although I eagerly longed to discover myself to the cottagers, I ought not to make the attempt until I had first become master of their language, which knowledge might enable me to make them overlook the deformity of my figure, for with this also the contrast perpetually presented to my eyes had made me acquainted.

"I had admired the perfect forms of my cottagers—their grace, beauty, and delicate complexions; but how was I terrified when I viewed myself in a transparent pool! At first I started back, unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror; and when I became fully convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am, I was filled with the bitterest sensations of despondence and mortification. Alas! I did not yet entirely know the fatal effects of this miserable deformity.

"As the sun became warmer and the light of day longer, the snow vanished, and I beheld the bare trees and the black earth. From this time Felix was more employed, and the heart-moving indications of impending famine disappeared. Their food, as I afterwards found, was coarse, but it was wholesome; and they procured a sufficiency of it. Several new kinds of plants sprang up in the garden, which they dressed; and these signs of comfort increased daily as the season advanced.

"The old man, leaning on his son, walked each day at noon, when it did not rain, as I found it was called when the heavens poured forth its waters. This frequently took place, but a high wind quickly dried the earth, and the season became far more pleasant than it had been.

"My mode of life in my hovel was uniform. During the morning I attended the motions of the cottagers, and when they were dispersed in various occupations, I slept; the remainder of the day was spent in observing my friends. When they had retired to rest, if there was any moon or the night was star-light, I went into the woods and collected my own food and fuel for the cottage. When I returned, as often as it was necessary, I cleared their path from the snow and performed those offices that I had seen done by Felix. I afterwards found that these labours, performed by an invisible hand, greatly astonished them; and once or twice I heard them, on these occasions, utter the words 'good spirit,' 'wonderful'; but I did not then understand the signification of these terms.

“My thoughts now became more active, and I longed to discover the motives and feelings of these lovely creatures; I was inquisitive to know why Felix appeared so miserable and Agatha so sad. I thought (foolish wretch!) that it might be in my power to restore happiness to these deserving people. When I slept or was absent, the forms of the venerable blind father, the gentle Agatha, and the excellent Felix flitted before me. I looked upon them as superior beings who would be the arbiters of my future destiny. I formed in my imagination a thousand pictures of presenting myself to them, and their reception of me. I imagined that they would be disgusted, until, by my gentle demeanour and conciliating words, I should first win their favour and afterwards their love.

“These thoughts exhilarated me and led me to apply with fresh ardour to the acquiring the art of language. My organs were indeed harsh, but supple; and although my voice was very unlike the soft music of their tones, yet I pronounced such words as I understood with tolerable ease. It was as the ass and the lap-dog; yet surely the gentle ass whose intentions were affectionate, although his manners were rude, deserved better treatment than blows and execration.

“The pleasant showers and genial warmth of spring greatly altered the aspect of the earth. Men who before this change seemed to have been hid in caves dispersed themselves and were employed in various arts of cultivation. The birds sang in more cheerful notes, and the leaves began to bud forth on the trees. Happy, happy earth! Fit habitation for gods, which, so short a time before, was bleak, damp, and unwholesome. My spirits were elevated by the enchanting appearance of nature; the past was blotted from my memory, the present was tranquil, and the future gilded by bright rays of hope and anticipations of joy.”

Chapter 13

“I now hasten to the more moving part of my story. I shall relate events that impressed me with feelings which, from what I had been, have made me what I am.

“Spring advanced rapidly; the weather became fine and the skies cloudless. It surprised me that what before was desert and gloomy should now bloom with the most beautiful flowers and verdure. My senses were gratified and refreshed by a thousand scents of delight and a thousand sights of beauty.

“It was on one of these days, when my cottagers periodically rested from labour—the old man played on his guitar, and the children listened to him—that I observed the countenance of Felix was melancholy beyond expression; he sighed frequently, and once his father paused in his music, and I conjectured by his manner that he inquired the cause of his son’s sorrow. Felix replied in a cheerful accent, and the old man was recommencing his music when someone tapped at the door.

“It was a lady on horseback, accompanied by a country-man as a guide. The lady was dressed in a dark suit and covered with a thick black veil. Agatha asked a question, to which the stranger only replied by pronouncing, in a sweet accent, the name of Felix. Her voice was musical but unlike that of either of my friends. On hearing this word, Felix came up hastily to the lady, who, when she saw him, threw up her veil, and I beheld a countenance of angelic beauty and expression. Her hair of a shining raven black, and curiously braided; her eyes were dark, but gentle, although animated; her features of a regular proportion, and her complexion wondrously fair, each cheek tinged with a lovely pink.

“Felix seemed ravished with delight when he saw her, every trait of sorrow vanished from his face, and it instantly expressed a degree of ecstatic joy, of which I could hardly have believed it capable; his eyes sparkled, as his cheek flushed with pleasure; and at that moment I thought him as beautiful as the stranger. She appeared affected by different feelings; wiping a few tears from her lovely eyes, she held out her hand to Felix, who kissed it rapturously and called her, as well as I could distinguish, his sweet Arabian. She did not appear to understand him, but smiled. He assisted her to dismount, and dismissing her guide, conducted her into the cottage. Some

conversation took place between him and his father, and the young stranger knelt at the old man's feet and would have kissed his hand, but he raised her and embraced her affectionately.

"I soon perceived that although the stranger uttered articulate sounds and appeared to have a language of her own, she was neither understood by nor herself understood the cottagers. They made many signs which I did not comprehend, but I saw that her presence diffused gladness through the cottage, dispelling their sorrow as the sun dissipates the morning mists. Felix seemed peculiarly happy and with smiles of delight welcomed his Arabian. Agatha, the ever-gentle Agatha, kissed the hands of the lovely stranger, and pointing to her brother, made signs which appeared to me to mean that he had been sorrowful until she came. Some hours passed thus, while they, by their countenances, expressed joy, the cause of which I did not comprehend. Presently I found, by the frequent recurrence of some sound which the stranger repeated after them, that she was endeavouring to learn their language; and the idea instantly occurred to me that I should make use of the same instructions to the same end. The stranger learned about twenty words at the first lesson; most of them, indeed, were those which I had before understood, but I profited by the others.

"As night came on, Agatha and the Arabian retired early. When they separated Felix kissed the hand of the stranger and said, 'Good night sweet Safie.' He sat up much longer, conversing with his father, and by the frequent repetition of her name I conjectured that their lovely guest was the subject of their conversation. I ardently desired to understand them, and bent every faculty towards that purpose, but found it utterly impossible.

"The next morning Felix went out to his work, and after the usual occupations of Agatha were finished, the Arabian sat at the feet of the old man, and taking his guitar, played some airs so entrancingly beautiful that they at once drew tears of sorrow and delight from my eyes. She sang, and her voice flowed in a rich cadence, swelling or dying away like a nightingale of the woods.

"When she had finished, she gave the guitar to Agatha, who at first declined it. She played a simple air, and her voice accompanied it in sweet accents, but unlike the wondrous strain of the stranger. The old man appeared enraptured and said some words which Agatha endeavoured to explain to Safie, and by which he appeared to wish to express that she bestowed on him the greatest delight by her music.

“The days now passed as peaceably as before, with the sole alteration that joy had taken place of sadness in the countenances of my friends. Safie was always gay and happy; she and I improved rapidly in the knowledge of language, so that in two months I began to comprehend most of the words uttered by my protectors.

“In the meanwhile also the black ground was covered with herbage, and the green banks interspersed with innumerable flowers, sweet to the scent and the eyes, stars of pale radiance among the moonlight woods; the sun became warmer, the nights clear and balmy; and my nocturnal rambles were an extreme pleasure to me, although they were considerably shortened by the late setting and early rising of the sun, for I never ventured abroad during daylight, fearful of meeting with the same treatment I had formerly endured in the first village which I entered.

“My days were spent in close attention, that I might more speedily master the language; and I may boast that I improved more rapidly than the Arabian, who understood very little and conversed in broken accents, whilst I comprehended and could imitate almost every word that was spoken.

“While I improved in speech, I also learned the science of letters as it was taught to the stranger, and this opened before me a wide field for wonder and delight.

“The book from which Felix instructed Safie was Volney’s Ruins of Empires. I should not have understood the purport of this book had not Felix, in reading it, given very minute explanations. He had chosen this work, he said, because the declamatory style was framed in imitation of the Eastern authors. Through this work I obtained a cursory knowledge of history and a view of the several empires at present existing in the world; it gave me an insight into the manners, governments, and religions of the different nations of the earth. I heard of the slothful Asiatics, of the stupendous genius and mental activity of the Grecians, of the wars and wonderful virtue of the early Romans—of their subsequent degenerating—of the decline of that mighty empire, of chivalry, Christianity, and kings. I heard of the discovery of the American hemisphere and wept with Safie over the hapless fate of its original inhabitants.

“These wonderful narrations inspired me with strange feelings. Was man, indeed, at once so powerful, so virtuous and magnificent, yet so vicious and base? He appeared at one time a mere scion of the evil principle and at another as all that can be conceived of noble and godlike. To be a

great and virtuous man appeared the highest honour that can befall a sensitive being; to be base and vicious, as many on record have been, appeared the lowest degradation, a condition more abject than that of the blind mole or harmless worm. For a long time I could not conceive how one man could go forth to murder his fellow, or even why there were laws and governments; but when I heard details of vice and bloodshed, my wonder ceased and I turned away with disgust and loathing.

"Every conversation of the cottagers now opened new wonders to me. While I listened to the instructions which Felix bestowed upon the Arabian, the strange system of human society was explained to me. I heard of the division of property, of immense wealth and squalid poverty, of rank, descent, and noble blood.

"The words induced me to turn towards myself. I learned that the possessions most esteemed by your fellow creatures were high and unsullied descent united with riches. A man might be respected with only one of these advantages, but without either he was considered, except in very rare instances, as a vagabond and a slave, doomed to waste his powers for the profits of the chosen few! And what was I? Of my creation and creator I was absolutely ignorant, but I knew that I possessed no money, no friends, no kind of property. I was, besides, endued with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome; I was not even of the same nature as man. I was more agile than they and could subsist upon coarser diet; I bore the extremes of heat and cold with less injury to my frame; my stature far exceeded theirs. When I looked around I saw and heard of none like me. Was I, then, a monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled and whom all men disowned?

"I cannot describe to you the agony that these reflections inflicted upon me; I tried to dispel them, but sorrow only increased with knowledge. Oh, that I had forever remained in my native wood, nor known nor felt beyond the sensations of hunger, thirst, and heat!

"Of what a strange nature is knowledge! It clings to the mind when it has once seized on it like a lichen on the rock. I wished sometimes to shake off all thought and feeling, but I learned that there was but one means to overcome the sensation of pain, and that was death—a state which I feared yet did not understand. I admired virtue and good feelings and loved the gentle manners and amiable qualities of my cottagers, but I was shut out from intercourse with them, except through means which I obtained by

stealth, when I was unseen and unknown, and which rather increased than satisfied the desire I had of becoming one among my fellows. The gentle words of Agatha and the animated smiles of the charming Arabian were not for me. The mild exhortations of the old man and the lively conversation of the loved Felix were not for me. Miserable, unhappy wretch!

"Other lessons were impressed upon me even more deeply. I heard of the difference of sexes, and the birth and growth of children, how the father doted on the smiles of the infant, and the lively sallies of the older child, how all the life and cares of the mother were wrapped up in the precious charge, how the mind of youth expanded and gained knowledge, of brother, sister, and all the various relationships which bind one human being to another in mutual bonds.

"But where were my friends and relations? No father had watched my infant days, no mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses; or if they had, all my past life was now a blot, a blind vacancy in which I distinguished nothing. From my earliest remembrance I had been as I then was in height and proportion. I had never yet seen a being resembling me or who claimed any intercourse with me. What was I? The question again recurred, to be answered only with groans.

"I will soon explain to what these feelings tended, but allow me now to return to the cottagers, whose story excited in me such various feelings of indignation, delight, and wonder, but which all terminated in additional love and reverence for my protectors (for so I loved, in an innocent, half-painful self-deceit, to call them)."

Chapter 14

“Some time elapsed before I learned the history of my friends. It was one which could not fail to impress itself deeply on my mind, unfolding as it did a number of circumstances, each interesting and wonderful to one so utterly inexperienced as I was.

“The name of the old man was De Lacey. He was descended from a good family in France, where he had lived for many years in affluence, respected by his superiors and beloved by his equals. His son was bred in the service of his country, and Agatha had ranked with ladies of the highest distinction. A few months before my arrival they had lived in a large and luxurious city called Paris, surrounded by friends and possessed of every enjoyment which virtue, refinement of intellect, or taste, accompanied by a moderate fortune, could afford.

“The father of Safie had been the cause of their ruin. He was a Turkish merchant and had inhabited Paris for many years, when, for some reason which I could not learn, he became obnoxious to the government. He was seized and cast into prison the very day that Safie arrived from Constantinople to join him. He was tried and condemned to death. The injustice of his sentence was very flagrant; all Paris was indignant; and it was judged that his religion and wealth rather than the crime alleged against him had been the cause of his condemnation.

“Felix had accidentally been present at the trial; his horror and indignation were uncontrollable when he heard the decision of the court. He made, at that moment, a solemn vow to deliver him and then looked around for the means. After many fruitless attempts to gain admittance to the prison, he found a strongly grated window in an unguarded part of the building, which lighted the dungeon of the unfortunate Muhammadan, who, loaded with chains, waited in despair the execution of the barbarous sentence. Felix visited the grate at night and made known to the prisoner his intentions in his favour. The Turk, amazed and delighted, endeavoured to kindle the zeal of his deliverer by promises of reward and wealth. Felix rejected his offers with contempt, yet when he saw the lovely Safie, who was allowed to visit her father and who by her gestures expressed her lively gratitude, the youth could not help owning to his own mind that the captive possessed a treasure which would fully reward his toil and hazard.

“The Turk quickly perceived the impression that his daughter had made on the heart of Felix and endeavoured to secure him more entirely in his interests by the promise of her hand in marriage so soon as he should be conveyed to a place of safety. Felix was too delicate to accept this offer, yet he looked forward to the probability of the event as to the consummation of his happiness.

“During the ensuing days, while the preparations were going forward for the escape of the merchant, the zeal of Felix was warmed by several letters that he received from this lovely girl, who found means to express her thoughts in the language of her lover by the aid of an old man, a servant of her father who understood French. She thanked him in the most ardent terms for his intended services towards her parent, and at the same time she gently deplored her own fate.

“I have copies of these letters, for I found means, during my residence in the hovel, to procure the implements of writing; and the letters were often in the hands of Felix or Agatha. Before I depart I will give them to you; they will prove the truth of my tale; but at present, as the sun is already far declined, I shall only have time to repeat the substance of them to you.

“Safie related that her mother was a Christian Arab, seized and made a slave by the Turks; recommended by her beauty, she had won the heart of the father of Safie, who married her. The young girl spoke in high and enthusiastic terms of her mother, who, born in freedom, spurned the bondage to which she was now reduced. She instructed her daughter in the tenets of her religion and taught her to aspire to higher powers of intellect and an independence of spirit forbidden to the female followers of Muhammad. This lady died, but her lessons were indelibly impressed on the mind of Safie, who sickened at the prospect of again returning to Asia and being immured within the walls of a harem, allowed only to occupy herself with infantile amusements, ill-suited to the temper of her soul, now accustomed to grand ideas and a noble emulation for virtue. The prospect of marrying a Christian and remaining in a country where women were allowed to take a rank in society was enchanting to her.

“The day for the execution of the Turk was fixed, but on the night previous to it he quitted his prison and before morning was distant many leagues from Paris. Felix had procured passports in the name of his father, sister, and himself. He had previously communicated his plan to the former,

who aided the deceit by quitting his house, under the pretence of a journey and concealed himself, with his daughter, in an obscure part of Paris.

“Felix conducted the fugitives through France to Lyons and across Mont Cenis to Leghorn, where the merchant had decided to wait a favourable opportunity of passing into some part of the Turkish dominions.

“Safie resolved to remain with her father until the moment of his departure, before which time the Turk renewed his promise that she should be united to his deliverer; and Felix remained with them in expectation of that event; and in the meantime he enjoyed the society of the Arabian, who exhibited towards him the simplest and tenderest affection. They conversed with one another through the means of an interpreter, and sometimes with the interpretation of looks; and Safie sang to him the divine airs of her native country.

“The Turk allowed this intimacy to take place and encouraged the hopes of the youthful lovers, while in his heart he had formed far other plans. He loathed the idea that his daughter should be united to a Christian, but he feared the resentment of Felix if he should appear lukewarm, for he knew that he was still in the power of his deliverer if he should choose to betray him to the Italian state which they inhabited. He revolved a thousand plans by which he should be enabled to prolong the deceit until it might be no longer necessary, and secretly to take his daughter with him when he departed. His plans were facilitated by the news which arrived from Paris.

“The government of France were greatly enraged at the escape of their victim and spared no pains to detect and punish his deliverer. The plot of Felix was quickly discovered, and De Lacey and Agatha were thrown into prison. The news reached Felix and roused him from his dream of pleasure. His blind and aged father and his gentle sister lay in a noisome dungeon while he enjoyed the free air and the society of her whom he loved. This idea was torture to him. He quickly arranged with the Turk that if the latter should find a favourable opportunity for escape before Felix could return to Italy, Safie should remain as a boarder at a convent at Leghorn; and then, quitting the lovely Arabian, he hastened to Paris and delivered himself up to the vengeance of the law, hoping to free De Lacey and Agatha by this proceeding.

“He did not succeed. They remained confined for five months before the trial took place, the result of which deprived them of their fortune and condemned them to a perpetual exile from their native country.

“They found a miserable asylum in the cottage in Germany, where I discovered them. Felix soon learned that the treacherous Turk, for whom he and his family endured such unheard-of oppression, on discovering that his deliverer was thus reduced to poverty and ruin, became a traitor to good feeling and honour and had quitted Italy with his daughter, insultingly sending Felix a pittance of money to aid him, as he said, in some plan of future maintenance.

“Such were the events that preyed on the heart of Felix and rendered him, when I first saw him, the most miserable of his family. He could have endured poverty, and while this distress had been the meed of his virtue, he gloried in it; but the ingratitude of the Turk and the loss of his beloved Safie were misfortunes more bitter and irreparable. The arrival of the Arabian now infused new life into his soul.

“When the news reached Leghorn that Felix was deprived of his wealth and rank, the merchant commanded his daughter to think no more of her lover, but to prepare to return to her native country. The generous nature of Safie was outraged by this command; she attempted to expostulate with her father, but he left her angrily, reiterating his tyrannical mandate.

“A few days after, the Turk entered his daughter’s apartment and told her hastily that he had reason to believe that his residence at Leghorn had been divulged and that he should speedily be delivered up to the French government; he had consequently hired a vessel to convey him to Constantinople, for which city he should sail in a few hours. He intended to leave his daughter under the care of a confidential servant, to follow at her leisure with the greater part of his property, which had not yet arrived at Leghorn.

“When alone, Safie resolved in her own mind the plan of conduct that it would become her to pursue in this emergency. A residence in Turkey was abhorrent to her; her religion and her feelings were alike averse to it. By some papers of her father which fell into her hands she heard of the exile of her lover and learnt the name of the spot where he then resided. She hesitated some time, but at length she formed her determination. Taking with her some jewels that belonged to her and a sum of money, she quitted Italy with an attendant, a native of Leghorn, but who understood the common language of Turkey, and departed for Germany.

“She arrived in safety at a town about twenty leagues from the cottage of De Lacey, when her attendant fell dangerously ill. Safie nursed her with the

most devoted affection, but the poor girl died, and the Arabian was left alone, unacquainted with the language of the country and utterly ignorant of the customs of the world. She fell, however, into good hands. The Italian had mentioned the name of the spot for which they were bound, and after her death the woman of the house in which they had lived took care that Safie should arrive in safety at the cottage of her lover."

Chapter 15

“Such was the history of my beloved cottagers. It impressed me deeply. I learned, from the views of social life which it developed, to admire their virtues and to deprecate the vices of mankind.

“As yet I looked upon crime as a distant evil, benevolence and generosity were ever present before me, inciting within me a desire to become an actor in the busy scene where so many admirable qualities were called forth and displayed. But in giving an account of the progress of my intellect, I must not omit a circumstance which occurred in the beginning of the month of August of the same year.

“One night during my accustomed visit to the neighbouring wood where I collected my own food and brought home firing for my protectors, I found on the ground a leathern portmanteau containing several articles of dress and some books. I eagerly seized the prize and returned with it to my hovel. Fortunately the books were written in the language, the elements of which I had acquired at the cottage; they consisted of Paradise Lost, a volume of Plutarch’s Lives, and the Sorrows of Werter. The possession of these treasures gave me extreme delight; I now continually studied and exercised my mind upon these histories, whilst my friends were employed in their ordinary occupations.

“I can hardly describe to you the effect of these books. They produced in me an infinity of new images and feelings, that sometimes raised me to ecstasy, but more frequently sunk me into the lowest dejection. In the Sorrows of Werter, besides the interest of its simple and affecting story, so many opinions are canvassed and so many lights thrown upon what had hitherto been to me obscure subjects that I found in it a never-ending source of speculation and astonishment. The gentle and domestic manners it described, combined with lofty sentiments and feelings, which had for their object something out of self, accorded well with my experience among my protectors and with the wants which were forever alive in my own bosom. But I thought Werter himself a more divine being than I had ever beheld or imagined; his character contained no pretension, but it sank deep. The disquisitions upon death and suicide were calculated to fill me with wonder. I did not pretend to enter into the merits of the case, yet I inclined towards

the opinions of the hero, whose extinction I wept, without precisely understanding it.

"As I read, however, I applied much personally to my own feelings and condition. I found myself similar yet at the same time strangely unlike to the beings concerning whom I read and to whose conversation I was a listener. I sympathized with and partly understood them, but I was unformed in mind; I was dependent on none and related to none. 'The path of my departure was free,' and there was none to lament my annihilation. My person was hideous and my stature gigantic. What did this mean? Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination? These questions continually recurred, but I was unable to solve them.

"The volume of Plutarch's Lives which I possessed contained the histories of the first founders of the ancient republics. This book had a far different effect upon me from the Sorrows of Werter. I learned from Werter's imaginations despondency and gloom, but Plutarch taught me high thoughts; he elevated me above the wretched sphere of my own reflections, to admire and love the heroes of past ages. Many things I read surpassed my understanding and experience. I had a very confused knowledge of kingdoms, wide extents of country, mighty rivers, and boundless seas. But I was perfectly unacquainted with towns and large assemblages of men. The cottage of my protectors had been the only school in which I had studied human nature, but this book developed new and mightier scenes of action. I read of men concerned in public affairs, governing or massacring their species. I felt the greatest ardour for virtue rise within me, and abhorrence for vice, as far as I understood the signification of those terms, relative as they were, as I applied them, to pleasure and pain alone. Induced by these feelings, I was of course led to admire peaceable lawgivers, Numa, Solon, and Lycurgus, in preference to Romulus and Theseus. The patriarchal lives of my protectors caused these impressions to take a firm hold on my mind; perhaps, if my first introduction to humanity had been made by a young soldier, burning for glory and slaughter, I should have been imbued with different sensations.

"But Paradise Lost excited different and far deeper emotions. I read it, as I had read the other volumes which had fallen into my hands, as a true history. It moved every feeling of wonder and awe that the picture of an omnipotent God warring with his creatures was capable of exciting. I often referred the several situations, as their similarity struck me, to my own.

Like Adam, I was apparently united by no link to any other being in existence; but his state was far different from mine in every other respect. He had come forth from the hands of God a perfect creature, happy and prosperous, guarded by the especial care of his Creator; he was allowed to converse with and acquire knowledge from beings of a superior nature, but I was wretched, helpless, and alone. Many times I considered Satan as the fitter emblem of my condition, for often, like him, when I viewed the bliss of my protectors, the bitter gall of envy rose within me.

"Another circumstance strengthened and confirmed these feelings. Soon after my arrival in the hovel I discovered some papers in the pocket of the dress which I had taken from your laboratory. At first I had neglected them, but now that I was able to decipher the characters in which they were written, I began to study them with diligence. It was your journal of the four months that preceded my creation. You minutely described in these papers every step you took in the progress of your work; this history was mingled with accounts of domestic occurrences. You doubtless recollect these papers. Here they are. Everything is related in them which bears reference to my accursed origin; the whole detail of that series of disgusting circumstances which produced it is set in view; the minutest description of my odious and loathsome person is given, in language which painted your own horrors and rendered mine indelible. I sickened as I read. 'Hateful day when I received life!' I exclaimed in agony. 'Accursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even YOU turned from me in disgust? God, in pity, made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy type of yours, more horrid even from the very resemblance. Satan had his companions, fellow devils, to admire and encourage him, but I am solitary and abhorred.'

"These were the reflections of my hours of despondency and solitude; but when I contemplated the virtues of the cottagers, their amiable and benevolent dispositions, I persuaded myself that when they should become acquainted with my admiration of their virtues they would compassionate me and overlook my personal deformity. Could they turn from their door one, however monstrous, who solicited their compassion and friendship? I resolved, at least, not to despair, but in every way to fit myself for an interview with them which would decide my fate. I postponed this attempt for some months longer, for the importance attached to its success inspired me with a dread lest I should fail. Besides, I found that my understanding

improved so much with every day's experience that I was unwilling to commence this undertaking until a few more months should have added to my sagacity.

"Several changes, in the meantime, took place in the cottage. The presence of Safie diffused happiness among its inhabitants, and I also found that a greater degree of plenty reigned there. Felix and Agatha spent more time in amusement and conversation, and were assisted in their labours by servants. They did not appear rich, but they were contented and happy; their feelings were serene and peaceful, while mine became every day more tumultuous. Increase of knowledge only discovered to me more clearly what a wretched outcast I was. I cherished hope, it is true, but it vanished when I beheld my person reflected in water or my shadow in the moonshine, even as that frail image and that inconstant shade.

"I endeavoured to crush these fears and to fortify myself for the trial which in a few months I resolved to undergo; and sometimes I allowed my thoughts, unchecked by reason, to ramble in the fields of Paradise, and dared to fancy amiable and lovely creatures sympathizing with my feelings and cheering my gloom; their angelic countenances breathed smiles of consolation. But it was all a dream; no Eve soothed my sorrows nor shared my thoughts; I was alone. I remembered Adam's supplication to his Creator. But where was mine? He had abandoned me, and in the bitterness of my heart I cursed him.

"Autumn passed thus. I saw, with surprise and grief, the leaves decay and fall, and nature again assume the barren and bleak appearance it had worn when I first beheld the woods and the lovely moon. Yet I did not heed the bleakness of the weather; I was better fitted by my conformation for the endurance of cold than heat. But my chief delights were the sight of the flowers, the birds, and all the gay apparel of summer; when those deserted me, I turned with more attention towards the cottagers. Their happiness was not decreased by the absence of summer. They loved and sympathized with one another; and their joys, depending on each other, were not interrupted by the casualties that took place around them. The more I saw of them, the greater became my desire to claim their protection and kindness; my heart yearned to be known and loved by these amiable creatures; to see their sweet looks directed towards me with affection was the utmost limit of my ambition. I dared not think that they would turn them from me with disdain and horror. The poor that stopped at their door were never driven away. I

asked, it is true, for greater treasures than a little food or rest: I required kindness and sympathy; but I did not believe myself utterly unworthy of it.

"The winter advanced, and an entire revolution of the seasons had taken place since I awoke into life. My attention at this time was solely directed towards my plan of introducing myself into the cottage of my protectors. I revolved many projects, but that on which I finally fixed was to enter the dwelling when the blind old man should be alone. I had sagacity enough to discover that the unnatural hideousness of my person was the chief object of horror with those who had formerly beheld me. My voice, although harsh, had nothing terrible in it; I thought, therefore, that if in the absence of his children I could gain the good will and mediation of the old De Lacey, I might by his means be tolerated by my younger protectors.

"One day, when the sun shone on the red leaves that strewed the ground and diffused cheerfulness, although it denied warmth, Safie, Agatha, and Felix departed on a long country walk, and the old man, at his own desire, was left alone in the cottage. When his children had departed, he took up his guitar and played several mournful but sweet airs, more sweet and mournful than I had ever heard him play before. At first his countenance was illuminated with pleasure, but as he continued, thoughtfulness and sadness succeeded; at length, laying aside the instrument, he sat absorbed in reflection.

"My heart beat quick; this was the hour and moment of trial, which would decide my hopes or realize my fears. The servants were gone to a neighbouring fair. All was silent in and around the cottage; it was an excellent opportunity; yet, when I proceeded to execute my plan, my limbs failed me and I sank to the ground. Again I rose, and exerting all the firmness of which I was master, removed the planks which I had placed before my hovel to conceal my retreat. The fresh air revived me, and with renewed determination I approached the door of their cottage.

"I knocked. 'Who is there?' said the old man. 'Come in.'

"I entered. 'Pardon this intrusion,' said I; 'I am a traveller in want of a little rest; you would greatly oblige me if you would allow me to remain a few minutes before the fire.'

"'Enter,' said De Lacey, 'and I will try in what manner I can to relieve your wants; but, unfortunately, my children are from home, and as I am blind, I am afraid I shall find it difficult to procure food for you.'

“‘Do not trouble yourself, my kind host; I have food; it is warmth and rest only that I need.’

“I sat down, and a silence ensued. I knew that every minute was precious to me, yet I remained irresolute in what manner to commence the interview, when the old man addressed me. ‘By your language, stranger, I suppose you are my countryman; are you French?’

“‘No; but I was educated by a French family and understand that language only. I am now going to claim the protection of some friends, whom I sincerely love, and of whose favour I have some hopes.’

“‘Are they Germans?’

“‘No, they are French. But let us change the subject. I am an unfortunate and deserted creature, I look around and I have no relation or friend upon earth. These amiable people to whom I go have never seen me and know little of me. I am full of fears, for if I fail there, I am an outcast in the world forever.’

“‘Do not despair. To be friendless is indeed to be unfortunate, but the hearts of men, when unprejudiced by any obvious self-interest, are full of brotherly love and charity. Rely, therefore, on your hopes; and if these friends are good and amiable, do not despair.’

“‘They are kind—they are the most excellent creatures in the world; but, unfortunately, they are prejudiced against me. I have good dispositions; my life has been hitherto harmless and in some degree beneficial; but a fatal prejudice clouds their eyes, and where they ought to see a feeling and kind friend, they behold only a detestable monster.’

“‘That is indeed unfortunate; but if you are really blameless, cannot you undeceive them?’

“‘I am about to undertake that task; and it is on that account that I feel so many overwhelming terrors. I tenderly love these friends; I have, unknown to them, been for many months in the habits of daily kindness towards them; but they believe that I wish to injure them, and it is that prejudice which I wish to overcome.’

“‘Where do these friends reside?’

“‘Near this spot.’

“The old man paused and then continued, ‘If you will unreservedly confide to me the particulars of your tale, I perhaps may be of use in undeceiving them. I am blind and cannot judge of your countenance, but there is something in your words which persuades me that you are sincere. I

am poor and an exile, but it will afford me true pleasure to be in any way serviceable to a human creature.'

"'Excellent man! I thank you and accept your generous offer. You raise me from the dust by this kindness; and I trust that, by your aid, I shall not be driven from the society and sympathy of your fellow creatures.'

"'Heaven forbid! Even if you were really criminal, for that can only drive you to desperation, and not instigate you to virtue. I also am unfortunate; I and my family have been condemned, although innocent; judge, therefore, if I do not feel for your misfortunes.'

"'How can I thank you, my best and only benefactor? From your lips first have I heard the voice of kindness directed towards me; I shall be forever grateful; and your present humanity assures me of success with those friends whom I am on the point of meeting.'

"'May I know the names and residence of those friends?'

"I paused. This, I thought, was the moment of decision, which was to rob me of or bestow happiness on me forever. I struggled vainly for firmness sufficient to answer him, but the effort destroyed all my remaining strength; I sank on the chair and sobbed aloud. At that moment I heard the steps of my younger protectors. I had not a moment to lose, but seizing the hand of the old man, I cried, 'Now is the time! Save and protect me! You and your family are the friends whom I seek. Do not you desert me in the hour of trial!'

"'Great God!' exclaimed the old man. 'Who are you?'

"At that instant the cottage door was opened, and Felix, Safie, and Agatha entered. Who can describe their horror and consternation on beholding me? Agatha fainted, and Safie, unable to attend to her friend, rushed out of the cottage. Felix darted forward, and with supernatural force tore me from his father, to whose knees I clung, in a transport of fury, he dashed me to the ground and struck me violently with a stick. I could have torn him limb from limb, as the lion rends the antelope. But my heart sank within me as with bitter sickness, and I refrained. I saw him on the point of repeating his blow, when, overcome by pain and anguish, I quitted the cottage, and in the general tumult escaped unperceived to my hovel."

Chapter 16

“Cursed, cursed creator! Why did I live? Why, in that instant, did I not extinguish the spark of existence which you had so wantonly bestowed? I know not; despair had not yet taken possession of me; my feelings were those of rage and revenge. I could with pleasure have destroyed the cottage and its inhabitants and have glutted myself with their shrieks and misery.

“When night came I quitted my retreat and wandered in the wood; and now, no longer restrained by the fear of discovery, I gave vent to my anguish in fearful howlings. I was like a wild beast that had broken the toils, destroying the objects that obstructed me and ranging through the wood with a stag-like swiftness. Oh! What a miserable night I passed! The cold stars shone in mockery, and the bare trees waved their branches above me; now and then the sweet voice of a bird burst forth amidst the universal stillness. All, save I, were at rest or in enjoyment; I, like the arch-fiend, bore a hell within me, and finding myself unsympathized with, wished to tear up the trees, spread havoc and destruction around me, and then to have sat down and enjoyed the ruin.

“But this was a luxury of sensation that could not endure; I became fatigued with excess of bodily exertion and sank on the damp grass in the sick impotence of despair. There was none among the myriads of men that existed who would pity or assist me; and should I feel kindness towards my enemies? No; from that moment I declared everlasting war against the species, and more than all, against him who had formed me and sent me forth to this insupportable misery.

“The sun rose; I heard the voices of men and knew that it was impossible to return to my retreat during that day. Accordingly I hid myself in some thick underwood, determining to devote the ensuing hours to reflection on my situation.

“The pleasant sunshine and the pure air of day restored me to some degree of tranquillity; and when I considered what had passed at the cottage, I could not help believing that I had been too hasty in my conclusions. I had certainly acted imprudently. It was apparent that my conversation had interested the father in my behalf, and I was a fool in having exposed my person to the horror of his children. I ought to have familiarized the old De Lacey to me, and by degrees to have discovered

myself to the rest of his family, when they should have been prepared for my approach. But I did not believe my errors to be irretrievable, and after much consideration I resolved to return to the cottage, seek the old man, and by my representations win him to my party.

"These thoughts calmed me, and in the afternoon I sank into a profound sleep; but the fever of my blood did not allow me to be visited by peaceful dreams. The horrible scene of the preceding day was forever acting before my eyes; the females were flying and the enraged Felix tearing me from his father's feet. I awoke exhausted, and finding that it was already night, I crept forth from my hiding-place, and went in search of food.

"When my hunger was appeased, I directed my steps towards the well-known path that conducted to the cottage. All there was at peace. I crept into my hovel and remained in silent expectation of the accustomed hour when the family arose. That hour passed, the sun mounted high in the heavens, but the cottagers did not appear. I trembled violently, apprehending some dreadful misfortune. The inside of the cottage was dark, and I heard no motion; I cannot describe the agony of this suspense.

"Presently two countrymen passed by, but pausing near the cottage, they entered into conversation, using violent gesticulations; but I did not understand what they said, as they spoke the language of the country, which differed from that of my protectors. Soon after, however, Felix approached with another man; I was surprised, as I knew that he had not quitted the cottage that morning, and waited anxiously to discover from his discourse the meaning of these unusual appearances.

"'Do you consider,' said his companion to him, 'that you will be obliged to pay three months' rent and to lose the produce of your garden? I do not wish to take any unfair advantage, and I beg therefore that you will take some days to consider of your determination.'

"'It is utterly useless,' replied Felix; 'we can never again inhabit your cottage. The life of my father is in the greatest danger, owing to the dreadful circumstance that I have related. My wife and my sister will never recover from their horror. I entreat you not to reason with me any more. Take possession of your tenement and let me fly from this place.'

"Felix trembled violently as he said this. He and his companion entered the cottage, in which they remained for a few minutes, and then departed. I never saw any of the family of De Lacey more.

“I continued for the remainder of the day in my hovel in a state of utter and stupid despair. My protectors had departed and had broken the only link that held me to the world. For the first time the feelings of revenge and hatred filled my bosom, and I did not strive to control them, but allowing myself to be borne away by the stream, I bent my mind towards injury and death. When I thought of my friends, of the mild voice of De Lacey, the gentle eyes of Agatha, and the exquisite beauty of the Arabian, these thoughts vanished and a gush of tears somewhat soothed me. But again when I reflected that they had spurned and deserted me, anger returned, a rage of anger, and unable to injure anything human, I turned my fury towards inanimate objects. As night advanced I placed a variety of combustibles around the cottage, and after having destroyed every vestige of cultivation in the garden, I waited with forced impatience until the moon had sunk to commence my operations.

“As the night advanced, a fierce wind arose from the woods and quickly dispersed the clouds that had loitered in the heavens; the blast tore along like a mighty avalanche and produced a kind of insanity in my spirits that burst all bounds of reason and reflection. I lighted the dry branch of a tree and danced with fury around the devoted cottage, my eyes still fixed on the western horizon, the edge of which the moon nearly touched. A part of its orb was at length hid, and I waved my brand; it sank, and with a loud scream I fired the straw, and heath, and bushes, which I had collected. The wind fanned the fire, and the cottage was quickly enveloped by the flames, which clung to it and licked it with their forked and destroying tongues.

“As soon as I was convinced that no assistance could save any part of the habitation, I quitted the scene and sought for refuge in the woods.

“And now, with the world before me, whither should I bend my steps? I resolved to fly far from the scene of my misfortunes; but to me, hated and despised, every country must be equally horrible. At length the thought of you crossed my mind. I learned from your papers that you were my father, my creator; and to whom could I apply with more fitness than to him who had given me life? Among the lessons that Felix had bestowed upon Safie, geography had not been omitted; I had learned from these the relative situations of the different countries of the earth. You had mentioned Geneva as the name of your native town, and towards this place I resolved to proceed.

“But how was I to direct myself? I knew that I must travel in a southwesterly direction to reach my destination, but the sun was my only guide. I did not know the names of the towns that I was to pass through, nor could I ask information from a single human being; but I did not despair. From you only could I hope for succour, although towards you I felt no sentiment but that of hatred. Unfeeling, heartless creator! You had endowed me with perceptions and passions and then cast me abroad an object for the scorn and horror of mankind. But on you only had I any claim for pity and redress, and from you I determined to seek that justice which I vainly attempted to gain from any other being that wore the human form.

“My travels were long and the sufferings I endured intense. It was late in autumn when I quitted the district where I had so long resided. I travelled only at night, fearful of encountering the visage of a human being. Nature decayed around me, and the sun became heatless; rain and snow poured around me; mighty rivers were frozen; the surface of the earth was hard and chill, and bare, and I found no shelter. Oh, earth! How often did I imprecate curses on the cause of my being! The mildness of my nature had fled, and all within me was turned to gall and bitterness. The nearer I approached to your habitation, the more deeply did I feel the spirit of revenge enkindled in my heart. Snow fell, and the waters were hardened, but I rested not. A few incidents now and then directed me, and I possessed a map of the country; but I often wandered wide from my path. The agony of my feelings allowed me no respite; no incident occurred from which my rage and misery could not extract its food; but a circumstance that happened when I arrived on the confines of Switzerland, when the sun had recovered its warmth and the earth again began to look green, confirmed in an especial manner the bitterness and horror of my feelings.

“I generally rested during the day and travelled only when I was secured by night from the view of man. One morning, however, finding that my path lay through a deep wood, I ventured to continue my journey after the sun had risen; the day, which was one of the first of spring, cheered even me by the loveliness of its sunshine and the balminess of the air. I felt emotions of gentleness and pleasure, that had long appeared dead, revive within me. Half surprised by the novelty of these sensations, I allowed myself to be borne away by them, and forgetting my solitude and deformity, dared to be happy. Soft tears again bedewed my cheeks, and I even raised

my humid eyes with thankfulness towards the blessed sun, which bestowed such joy upon me.

“I continued to wind among the paths of the wood, until I came to its boundary, which was skirted by a deep and rapid river, into which many of the trees bent their branches, now budding with the fresh spring. Here I paused, not exactly knowing what path to pursue, when I heard the sound of voices, that induced me to conceal myself under the shade of a cypress. I was scarcely hid when a young girl came running towards the spot where I was concealed, laughing, as if she ran from someone in sport. She continued her course along the precipitous sides of the river, when suddenly her foot slipped, and she fell into the rapid stream. I rushed from my hiding-place and with extreme labour, from the force of the current, saved her and dragged her to shore. She was senseless, and I endeavoured by every means in my power to restore animation, when I was suddenly interrupted by the approach of a rustic, who was probably the person from whom she had playfully fled. On seeing me, he darted towards me, and tearing the girl from my arms, hastened towards the deeper parts of the wood. I followed speedily, I hardly knew why; but when the man saw me draw near, he aimed a gun, which he carried, at my body and fired. I sank to the ground, and my injurer, with increased swiftness, escaped into the wood.

“This was then the reward of my benevolence! I had saved a human being from destruction, and as a recompense I now writhed under the miserable pain of a wound which shattered the flesh and bone. The feelings of kindness and gentleness which I had entertained but a few moments before gave place to hellish rage and gnashing of teeth. Inflamed by pain, I vowed eternal hatred and vengeance to all mankind. But the agony of my wound overcame me; my pulses paused, and I fainted.

“For some weeks I led a miserable life in the woods, endeavouring to cure the wound which I had received. The ball had entered my shoulder, and I knew not whether it had remained there or passed through; at any rate I had no means of extracting it. My sufferings were augmented also by the oppressive sense of the injustice and ingratitude of their infliction. My daily vows rose for revenge—a deep and deadly revenge, such as would alone compensate for the outrages and anguish I had endured.

“After some weeks my wound healed, and I continued my journey. The labours I endured were no longer to be alleviated by the bright sun or gentle breezes of spring; all joy was but a mockery which insulted my desolate

state and made me feel more painfully that I was not made for the enjoyment of pleasure.

"But my toils now drew near a close, and in two months from this time I reached the environs of Geneva.

"It was evening when I arrived, and I retired to a hiding-place among the fields that surround it to meditate in what manner I should apply to you. I was oppressed by fatigue and hunger and far too unhappy to enjoy the gentle breezes of evening or the prospect of the sun setting behind the stupendous mountains of Jura.

"At this time a slight sleep relieved me from the pain of reflection, which was disturbed by the approach of a beautiful child, who came running into the recess I had chosen, with all the sportiveness of infancy. Suddenly, as I gazed on him, an idea seized me that this little creature was unprejudiced and had lived too short a time to have imbibed a horror of deformity. If, therefore, I could seize him and educate him as my companion and friend, I should not be so desolate in this peopled earth.

"Urged by this impulse, I seized on the boy as he passed and drew him towards me. As soon as he beheld my form, he placed his hands before his eyes and uttered a shrill scream; I drew his hand forcibly from his face and said, 'Child, what is the meaning of this? I do not intend to hurt you; listen to me.'

"He struggled violently. 'Let me go,' he cried; 'monster! Ugly wretch! You wish to eat me and tear me to pieces. You are an ogre. Let me go, or I will tell my papa.'

"'Boy, you will never see your father again; you must come with me.'

"'Hideous monster! Let me go. My papa is a syndic—he is M. Frankenstein—he will punish you. You dare not keep me.'

"'Frankenstein! you belong then to my enemy—to him towards whom I have sworn eternal revenge; you shall be my first victim.'

"The child still struggled and loaded me with epithets which carried despair to my heart; I grasped his throat to silence him, and in a moment he lay dead at my feet.

"I gazed on my victim, and my heart swelled with exultation and hellish triumph; clapping my hands, I exclaimed, 'I too can create desolation; my enemy is not invulnerable; this death will carry despair to him, and a thousand other miseries shall torment and destroy him.'

“As I fixed my eyes on the child, I saw something glittering on his breast. I took it; it was a portrait of a most lovely woman. In spite of my malignity, it softened and attracted me. For a few moments I gazed with delight on her dark eyes, fringed by deep lashes, and her lovely lips; but presently my rage returned; I remembered that I was forever deprived of the delights that such beautiful creatures could bestow and that she whose resemblance I contemplated would, in regarding me, have changed that air of divine benignity to one expressive of disgust and affright.

“Can you wonder that such thoughts transported me with rage? I only wonder that at that moment, instead of venting my sensations in exclamations and agony, I did not rush among mankind and perish in the attempt to destroy them.

“While I was overcome by these feelings, I left the spot where I had committed the murder, and seeking a more secluded hiding-place, I entered a barn which had appeared to me to be empty. A woman was sleeping on some straw; she was young, not indeed so beautiful as her whose portrait I held, but of an agreeable aspect and blooming in the loveliness of youth and health. Here, I thought, is one of those whose joy-imparting smiles are bestowed on all but me. And then I bent over her and whispered, ‘Awake, fairest, thy lover is near—he who would give his life but to obtain one look of affection from thine eyes; my beloved, awake!’

“The sleeper stirred; a thrill of terror ran through me. Should she indeed awake, and see me, and curse me, and denounce the murderer? Thus would she assuredly act if her darkened eyes opened and she beheld me. The thought was madness; it stirred the fiend within me—not I, but she, shall suffer; the murder I have committed because I am forever robbed of all that she could give me, she shall atone. The crime had its source in her; be hers the punishment! Thanks to the lessons of Felix and the sanguinary laws of man, I had learned now to work mischief. I bent over her and placed the portrait securely in one of the folds of her dress. She moved again, and I fled.

“For some days I haunted the spot where these scenes had taken place, sometimes wishing to see you, sometimes resolved to quit the world and its miseries forever. At length I wandered towards these mountains, and have ranged through their immense recesses, consumed by a burning passion which you alone can gratify. We may not part until you have promised to comply with my requisition. I am alone and miserable; man will not

associate with me; but one as deformed and horrible as myself would not deny herself to me. My companion must be of the same species and have the same defects. This being you must create.”

Chapter 17

The being finished speaking and fixed his looks upon me in the expectation of a reply. But I was bewildered, perplexed, and unable to arrange my ideas sufficiently to understand the full extent of his proposition. He continued,

"You must create a female for me with whom I can live in the interchange of those sympathies necessary for my being. This you alone can do, and I demand it of you as a right which you must not refuse to concede."

The latter part of his tale had kindled anew in me the anger that had died away while he narrated his peaceful life among the cottagers, and as he said this I could no longer suppress the rage that burned within me.

"I do refuse it," I replied; "and no torture shall ever extort a consent from me. You may render me the most miserable of men, but you shall never make me base in my own eyes. Shall I create another like yourself, whose joint wickedness might desolate the world. Begone! I have answered you; you may torture me, but I will never consent."

"You are in the wrong," replied the fiend; "and instead of threatening, I am content to reason with you. I am malicious because I am miserable. Am I not shunned and hated by all mankind? You, my creator, would tear me to pieces and triumph; remember that, and tell me why I should pity man more than he pities me? You would not call it murder if you could precipitate me into one of those ice-rifts and destroy my frame, the work of your own hands. Shall I respect man when he condemns me? Let him live with me in the interchange of kindness, and instead of injury I would bestow every benefit upon him with tears of gratitude at his acceptance. But that cannot be; the human senses are insurmountable barriers to our union. Yet mine shall not be the submission of abject slavery. I will revenge my injuries; if I cannot inspire love, I will cause fear, and chiefly towards you my arch-enemy, because my creator, do I swear inextinguishable hatred. Have a care; I will work at your destruction, nor finish until I desolate your heart, so that you shall curse the hour of your birth."

A fiendish rage animated him as he said this; his face was wrinkled into contortions too horrible for human eyes to behold; but presently he calmed himself and proceeded—

“I intended to reason. This passion is detrimental to me, for you do not reflect that YOU are the cause of its excess. If any being felt emotions of benevolence towards me, I should return them a hundred and a hundredfold; for that one creature’s sake I would make peace with the whole kind! But I now indulge in dreams of bliss that cannot be realized. What I ask of you is reasonable and moderate; I demand a creature of another sex, but as hideous as myself; the gratification is small, but it is all that I can receive, and it shall content me. It is true, we shall be monsters, cut off from all the world; but on that account we shall be more attached to one another. Our lives will not be happy, but they will be harmless and free from the misery I now feel. Oh! My creator, make me happy; let me feel gratitude towards you for one benefit! Let me see that I excite the sympathy of some existing thing; do not deny me my request!”

I was moved. I shuddered when I thought of the possible consequences of my consent, but I felt that there was some justice in his argument. His tale and the feelings he now expressed proved him to be a creature of fine sensations, and did I not as his maker owe him all the portion of happiness that it was in my power to bestow? He saw my change of feeling and continued,

“If you consent, neither you nor any other human being shall ever see us again; I will go to the vast wilds of South America. My food is not that of man; I do not destroy the lamb and the kid to glut my appetite; acorns and berries afford me sufficient nourishment. My companion will be of the same nature as myself and will be content with the same fare. We shall make our bed of dried leaves; the sun will shine on us as on man and will ripen our food. The picture I present to you is peaceful and human, and you must feel that you could deny it only in the wantonness of power and cruelty. Pitiless as you have been towards me, I now see compassion in your eyes; let me seize the favourable moment and persuade you to promise what I so ardently desire.”

“You propose,” replied I, “to fly from the habitations of man, to dwell in those wilds where the beasts of the field will be your only companions. How can you, who long for the love and sympathy of man, persevere in this exile? You will return and again seek their kindness, and you will meet with their detestation; your evil passions will be renewed, and you will then have a companion to aid you in the task of destruction. This may not be; cease to argue the point, for I cannot consent.”

“How inconstant are your feelings! But a moment ago you were moved by my representations, and why do you again harden yourself to my complaints? I swear to you, by the earth which I inhabit, and by you that made me, that with the companion you bestow I will quit the neighbourhood of man and dwell, as it may chance, in the most savage of places. My evil passions will have fled, for I shall meet with sympathy! My life will flow quietly away, and in my dying moments I shall not curse my maker.”

His words had a strange effect upon me. I compassionated him and sometimes felt a wish to console him, but when I looked upon him, when I saw the filthy mass that moved and talked, my heart sickened and my feelings were altered to those of horror and hatred. I tried to stifle these sensations; I thought that as I could not sympathize with him, I had no right to withhold from him the small portion of happiness which was yet in my power to bestow.

“You swear,” I said, “to be harmless; but have you not already shown a degree of malice that should reasonably make me distrust you? May not even this be a feint that will increase your triumph by affording a wider scope for your revenge?”

“How is this? I must not be trifled with, and I demand an answer. If I have no ties and no affections, hatred and vice must be my portion; the love of another will destroy the cause of my crimes, and I shall become a thing of whose existence everyone will be ignorant. My vices are the children of a forced solitude that I abhor, and my virtues will necessarily arise when I live in communion with an equal. I shall feel the affections of a sensitive being and become linked to the chain of existence and events from which I am now excluded.”

I paused some time to reflect on all he had related and the various arguments which he had employed. I thought of the promise of virtues which he had displayed on the opening of his existence and the subsequent blight of all kindly feeling by the loathing and scorn which his protectors had manifested towards him. His power and threats were not omitted in my calculations; a creature who could exist in the ice caves of the glaciers and hide himself from pursuit among the ridges of inaccessible precipices was a being possessing faculties it would be vain to cope with. After a long pause of reflection I concluded that the justice due both to him and my fellow

creatures demanded of me that I should comply with his request. Turning to him, therefore, I said,

"I consent to your demand, on your solemn oath to quit Europe forever, and every other place in the neighbourhood of man, as soon as I shall deliver into your hands a female who will accompany you in your exile."

"I swear," he cried, "by the sun, and by the blue sky of heaven, and by the fire of love that burns my heart, that if you grant my prayer, while they exist you shall never behold me again. Depart to your home and commence your labours; I shall watch their progress with unutterable anxiety; and fear not but that when you are ready I shall appear."

Saying this, he suddenly quitted me, fearful, perhaps, of any change in my sentiments. I saw him descend the mountain with greater speed than the flight of an eagle, and quickly lost among the undulations of the sea of ice.

His tale had occupied the whole day, and the sun was upon the verge of the horizon when he departed. I knew that I ought to hasten my descent towards the valley, as I should soon be encompassed in darkness; but my heart was heavy, and my steps slow. The labour of winding among the little paths of the mountain and fixing my feet firmly as I advanced perplexed me, occupied as I was by the emotions which the occurrences of the day had produced. Night was far advanced when I came to the halfway resting-place and seated myself beside the fountain. The stars shone at intervals as the clouds passed from over them; the dark pines rose before me, and every here and there a broken tree lay on the ground; it was a scene of wonderful solemnity and stirred strange thoughts within me. I wept bitterly, and clasping my hands in agony, I exclaimed, "Oh! Stars and clouds and winds, ye are all about to mock me; if ye really pity me, crush sensation and memory; let me become as nought; but if not, depart, depart, and leave me in darkness."

These were wild and miserable thoughts, but I cannot describe to you how the eternal twinkling of the stars weighed upon me and how I listened to every blast of wind as if it were a dull ugly siroc on its way to consume me.

Morning dawned before I arrived at the village of Chamounix; I took no rest, but returned immediately to Geneva. Even in my own heart I could give no expression to my sensations—they weighed on me with a mountain's weight and their excess destroyed my agony beneath them. Thus I returned home, and entering the house, presented myself to the family. My

haggard and wild appearance awoke intense alarm, but I answered no question, scarcely did I speak. I felt as if I were placed under a ban—as if I had no right to claim their sympathies—as if never more might I enjoy companionship with them. Yet even thus I loved them to adoration; and to save them, I resolved to dedicate myself to my most abhorred task. The prospect of such an occupation made every other circumstance of existence pass before me like a dream, and that thought only had to me the reality of life.

Chapter 18

Day after day, week after week, passed away on my return to Geneva; and I could not collect the courage to recommence my work. I feared the vengeance of the disappointed fiend, yet I was unable to overcome my repugnance to the task which was enjoined me. I found that I could not compose a female without again devoting several months to profound study and laborious disquisition. I had heard of some discoveries having been made by an English philosopher, the knowledge of which was material to my success, and I sometimes thought of obtaining my father's consent to visit England for this purpose; but I clung to every pretence of delay and shrank from taking the first step in an undertaking whose immediate necessity began to appear less absolute to me. A change indeed had taken place in me; my health, which had hitherto declined, was now much restored; and my spirits, when unchecked by the memory of my unhappy promise, rose proportionably. My father saw this change with pleasure, and he turned his thoughts towards the best method of eradicating the remains of my melancholy, which every now and then would return by fits, and with a devouring blackness overcast the approaching sunshine. At these moments I took refuge in the most perfect solitude. I passed whole days on the lake alone in a little boat, watching the clouds and listening to the rippling of the waves, silent and listless. But the fresh air and bright sun seldom failed to restore me to some degree of composure, and on my return I met the salutations of my friends with a readier smile and a more cheerful heart.

It was after my return from one of these rambles that my father, calling me aside, thus addressed me,

"I am happy to remark, my dear son, that you have resumed your former pleasures and seem to be returning to yourself. And yet you are still unhappy and still avoid our society. For some time I was lost in conjecture as to the cause of this, but yesterday an idea struck me, and if it is well founded, I conjure you to avow it. Reserve on such a point would be not only useless, but draw down treble misery on us all."

I trembled violently at his exordium, and my father continued—"I confess, my son, that I have always looked forward to your marriage with our dear Elizabeth as the tie of our domestic comfort and the stay of my declining years. You were attached to each other from your earliest infancy;

you studied together, and appeared, in dispositions and tastes, entirely suited to one another. But so blind is the experience of man that what I conceived to be the best assistants to my plan may have entirely destroyed it. You, perhaps, regard her as your sister, without any wish that she might become your wife. Nay, you may have met with another whom you may love; and considering yourself as bound in honour to Elizabeth, this struggle may occasion the poignant misery which you appear to feel."

"My dear father, reassure yourself. I love my cousin tenderly and sincerely. I never saw any woman who excited, as Elizabeth does, my warmest admiration and affection. My future hopes and prospects are entirely bound up in the expectation of our union."

"The expression of your sentiments of this subject, my dear Victor, gives me more pleasure than I have for some time experienced. If you feel thus, we shall assuredly be happy, however present events may cast a gloom over us. But it is this gloom which appears to have taken so strong a hold of your mind that I wish to dissipate. Tell me, therefore, whether you object to an immediate solemnization of the marriage. We have been unfortunate, and recent events have drawn us from that everyday tranquillity befitting my years and infirmities. You are younger; yet I do not suppose, possessed as you are of a competent fortune, that an early marriage would at all interfere with any future plans of honour and utility that you may have formed. Do not suppose, however, that I wish to dictate happiness to you or that a delay on your part would cause me any serious uneasiness. Interpret my words with candour and answer me, I conjure you, with confidence and sincerity."

I listened to my father in silence and remained for some time incapable of offering any reply. I revolved rapidly in my mind a multitude of thoughts and endeavoured to arrive at some conclusion. Alas! To me the idea of an immediate union with my Elizabeth was one of horror and dismay. I was bound by a solemn promise which I had not yet fulfilled and dared not break, or if I did, what manifold miseries might not impend over me and my devoted family! Could I enter into a festival with this deadly weight yet hanging round my neck and bowing me to the ground? I must perform my engagement and let the monster depart with his mate before I allowed myself to enjoy the delight of a union from which I expected peace.

I remembered also the necessity imposed upon me of either journeying to England or entering into a long correspondence with those philosophers of that country whose knowledge and discoveries were of indispensable use

to me in my present undertaking. The latter method of obtaining the desired intelligence was dilatory and unsatisfactory; besides, I had an insurmountable aversion to the idea of engaging myself in my loathsome task in my father's house while in habits of familiar intercourse with those I loved. I knew that a thousand fearful accidents might occur, the slightest of which would disclose a tale to thrill all connected with me with horror. I was aware also that I should often lose all self-command, all capacity of hiding the harrowing sensations that would possess me during the progress of my unearthly occupation. I must absent myself from all I loved while thus employed. Once commenced, it would quickly be achieved, and I might be restored to my family in peace and happiness. My promise fulfilled, the monster would depart forever. Or (so my fond fancy imaged) some accident might meanwhile occur to destroy him and put an end to my slavery forever.

These feelings dictated my answer to my father. I expressed a wish to visit England, but concealing the true reasons of this request, I clothed my desires under a guise which excited no suspicion, while I urged my desire with an earnestness that easily induced my father to comply. After so long a period of an absorbing melancholy that resembled madness in its intensity and effects, he was glad to find that I was capable of taking pleasure in the idea of such a journey, and he hoped that change of scene and varied amusement would, before my return, have restored me entirely to myself.

The duration of my absence was left to my own choice; a few months, or at most a year, was the period contemplated. One paternal kind precaution he had taken to ensure my having a companion. Without previously communicating with me, he had, in concert with Elizabeth, arranged that Clerval should join me at Strasbourg. This interfered with the solitude I coveted for the prosecution of my task; yet at the commencement of my journey the presence of my friend could in no way be an impediment, and truly I rejoiced that thus I should be saved many hours of lonely, maddening reflection. Nay, Henry might stand between me and the intrusion of my foe. If I were alone, would he not at times force his abhorred presence on me to remind me of my task or to contemplate its progress?

To England, therefore, I was bound, and it was understood that my union with Elizabeth should take place immediately on my return. My father's age rendered him extremely averse to delay. For myself, there was one reward I promised myself from my detested toils—one consolation for my

unparalleled sufferings; it was the prospect of that day when, enfranchised from my miserable slavery, I might claim Elizabeth and forget the past in my union with her.

I now made arrangements for my journey, but one feeling haunted me which filled me with fear and agitation. During my absence I should leave my friends unconscious of the existence of their enemy and unprotected from his attacks, exasperated as he might be by my departure. But he had promised to follow me wherever I might go, and would he not accompany me to England? This imagination was dreadful in itself, but soothing inasmuch as it supposed the safety of my friends. I was agonized with the idea of the possibility that the reverse of this might happen. But through the whole period during which I was the slave of my creature I allowed myself to be governed by the impulses of the moment; and my present sensations strongly intimated that the fiend would follow me and exempt my family from the danger of his machinations.

It was in the latter end of September that I again quitted my native country. My journey had been my own suggestion, and Elizabeth therefore acquiesced, but she was filled with disquiet at the idea of my suffering, away from her, the inroads of misery and grief. It had been her care which provided me a companion in Clerval—and yet a man is blind to a thousand minute circumstances which call forth a woman's sedulous attention. She longed to bid me hasten my return; a thousand conflicting emotions rendered her mute as she bade me a tearful, silent farewell.

I threw myself into the carriage that was to convey me away, hardly knowing whither I was going, and careless of what was passing around. I remembered only, and it was with a bitter anguish that I reflected on it, to order that my chemical instruments should be packed to go with me. Filled with dreary imaginations, I passed through many beautiful and majestic scenes, but my eyes were fixed and unobserving. I could only think of the bourne of my travels and the work which was to occupy me whilst they endured.

After some days spent in listless indolence, during which I traversed many leagues, I arrived at Strasbourg, where I waited two days for Clerval. He came. Alas, how great was the contrast between us! He was alive to every new scene, joyful when he saw the beauties of the setting sun, and more happy when he beheld it rise and recommence a new day. He pointed out to me the shifting colours of the landscape and the appearances of the

sky. “This is what it is to live,” he cried; “how I enjoy existence! But you, my dear Frankenstein, wherefore are you desponding and sorrowful!” In truth, I was occupied by gloomy thoughts and neither saw the descent of the evening star nor the golden sunrise reflected in the Rhine. And you, my friend, would be far more amused with the journal of Clerval, who observed the scenery with an eye of feeling and delight, than in listening to my reflections. I, a miserable wretch, haunted by a curse that shut up every avenue to enjoyment.

We had agreed to descend the Rhine in a boat from Strasbourg to Rotterdam, whence we might take shipping for London. During this voyage we passed many willowy islands and saw several beautiful towns. We stayed a day at Mannheim, and on the fifth from our departure from Strasbourg, arrived at Mainz. The course of the Rhine below Mainz becomes much more picturesque. The river descends rapidly and winds between hills, not high, but steep, and of beautiful forms. We saw many ruined castles standing on the edges of precipices, surrounded by black woods, high and inaccessible. This part of the Rhine, indeed, presents a singularly variegated landscape. In one spot you view rugged hills, ruined castles overlooking tremendous precipices, with the dark Rhine rushing beneath; and on the sudden turn of a promontory, flourishing vineyards with green sloping banks and a meandering river and populous towns occupy the scene.

We travelled at the time of the vintage and heard the song of the labourers as we glided down the stream. Even I, depressed in mind, and my spirits continually agitated by gloomy feelings, even I was pleased. I lay at the bottom of the boat, and as I gazed on the cloudless blue sky, I seemed to drink in a tranquillity to which I had long been a stranger. And if these were my sensations, who can describe those of Henry? He felt as if he had been transported to fairy-land and enjoyed a happiness seldom tasted by man. “I have seen,” he said, “the most beautiful scenes of my own country; I have visited the lakes of Lucerne and Uri, where the snowy mountains descend almost perpendicularly to the water, casting black and impenetrable shades, which would cause a gloomy and mournful appearance were it not for the most verdant islands that believe the eye by their gay appearance; I have seen this lake agitated by a tempest, when the wind tore up whirlwinds of water and gave you an idea of what the water-spout must be on the great ocean; and the waves dash with fury the base of the mountain, where the

priest and his mistress were overwhelmed by an avalanche and where their dying voices are still said to be heard amid the pauses of the nightly wind; I have seen the mountains of La Valais, and the Pays de Vaud; but this country, Victor, pleases me more than all those wonders. The mountains of Switzerland are more majestic and strange, but there is a charm in the banks of this divine river that I never before saw equalled. Look at that castle which overhangs yon precipice; and that also on the island, almost concealed amongst the foliage of those lovely trees; and now that group of labourers coming from among their vines; and that village half hid in the recess of the mountain. Oh, surely the spirit that inhabits and guards this place has a soul more in harmony with man than those who pile the glacier or retire to the inaccessible peaks of the mountains of our own country." Clerval! Beloved friend! Even now it delights me to record your words and to dwell on the praise of which you are so eminently deserving. He was a being formed in the "very poetry of nature." His wild and enthusiastic imagination was chastened by the sensibility of his heart. His soul overflowed with ardent affections, and his friendship was of that devoted and wondrous nature that the world-minded teach us to look for only in the imagination. But even human sympathies were not sufficient to satisfy his eager mind. The scenery of external nature, which others regard only with admiration, he loved with ardour:—

——The sounding cataract
Haunted him like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to him
An appetite; a feeling, and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, or any interest
Unborrow'd from the eye.

[Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey".]

And where does he now exist? Is this gentle and lovely being lost forever? Has this mind, so replete with ideas, imaginations fanciful and magnificent, which formed a world, whose existence depended on the life of its creator;—has this mind perished? Does it now only exist in my

memory? No, it is not thus; your form so divinely wrought, and beaming with beauty, has decayed, but your spirit still visits and consoles your unhappy friend.

Pardon this gush of sorrow; these ineffectual words are but a slight tribute to the unexampled worth of Henry, but they soothe my heart, overflowing with the anguish which his remembrance creates. I will proceed with my tale.

Beyond Cologne we descended to the plains of Holland; and we resolved to post the remainder of our way, for the wind was contrary and the stream of the river was too gentle to aid us. Our journey here lost the interest arising from beautiful scenery, but we arrived in a few days at Rotterdam, whence we proceeded by sea to England. It was on a clear morning, in the latter days of December, that I first saw the white cliffs of Britain. The banks of the Thames presented a new scene; they were flat but fertile, and almost every town was marked by the remembrance of some story. We saw Tilbury Fort and remembered the Spanish Armada, Gravesend, Woolwich, and Greenwich—places which I had heard of even in my country.

At length we saw the numerous steeples of London, St. Paul's towering above all, and the Tower famed in English history.

Chapter 19

London was our present point of rest; we determined to remain several months in this wonderful and celebrated city. Clerval desired the intercourse of the men of genius and talent who flourished at this time, but this was with me a secondary object; I was principally occupied with the means of obtaining the information necessary for the completion of my promise and quickly availed myself of the letters of introduction that I had brought with me, addressed to the most distinguished natural philosophers.

If this journey had taken place during my days of study and happiness, it would have afforded me inexpressible pleasure. But a blight had come over my existence, and I only visited these people for the sake of the information they might give me on the subject in which my interest was so terribly profound. Company was irksome to me; when alone, I could fill my mind with the sights of heaven and earth; the voice of Henry soothed me, and I could thus cheat myself into a transitory peace. But busy, uninteresting, joyous faces brought back despair to my heart. I saw an insurmountable barrier placed between me and my fellow men; this barrier was sealed with the blood of William and Justine, and to reflect on the events connected with those names filled my soul with anguish.

But in Clerval I saw the image of my former self; he was inquisitive and anxious to gain experience and instruction. The difference of manners which he observed was to him an inexhaustible source of instruction and amusement. He was also pursuing an object he had long had in view. His design was to visit India, in the belief that he had in his knowledge of its various languages, and in the views he had taken of its society, the means of materially assisting the progress of European colonization and trade. In Britain only could he further the execution of his plan. He was forever busy, and the only check to his enjoyments was my sorrowful and dejected mind. I tried to conceal this as much as possible, that I might not debar him from the pleasures natural to one who was entering on a new scene of life, undisturbed by any care or bitter recollection. I often refused to accompany him, alleging another engagement, that I might remain alone. I now also began to collect the materials necessary for my new creation, and this was to me like the torture of single drops of water continually falling on the head. Every thought that was devoted to it was an extreme anguish, and

every word that I spoke in allusion to it caused my lips to quiver, and my heart to palpitate.

After passing some months in London, we received a letter from a person in Scotland who had formerly been our visitor at Geneva. He mentioned the beauties of his native country and asked us if those were not sufficient allurements to induce us to prolong our journey as far north as Perth, where he resided. Clerval eagerly desired to accept this invitation, and I, although I abhorred society, wished to view again mountains and streams and all the wondrous works with which Nature adorns her chosen dwelling-places. We had arrived in England at the beginning of October, and it was now February. We accordingly determined to commence our journey towards the north at the expiration of another month. In this expedition we did not intend to follow the great road to Edinburgh, but to visit Windsor, Oxford, Matlock, and the Cumberland lakes, resolving to arrive at the completion of this tour about the end of July. I packed up my chemical instruments and the materials I had collected, resolving to finish my labours in some obscure nook in the northern highlands of Scotland.

We quitted London on the 27th of March and remained a few days at Windsor, rambling in its beautiful forest. This was a new scene to us mountaineers; the majestic oaks, the quantity of game, and the herds of stately deer were all novelties to us.

From thence we proceeded to Oxford. As we entered this city our minds were filled with the remembrance of the events that had been transacted there more than a century and a half before. It was here that Charles I. had collected his forces. This city had remained faithful to him, after the whole nation had forsaken his cause to join the standard of Parliament and liberty. The memory of that unfortunate king and his companions, the amiable Falkland, the insolent Goring, his queen, and son, gave a peculiar interest to every part of the city which they might be supposed to have inhabited. The spirit of elder days found a dwelling here, and we delighted to trace its footsteps. If these feelings had not found an imaginary gratification, the appearance of the city had yet in itself sufficient beauty to obtain our admiration. The colleges are ancient and picturesque; the streets are almost magnificent; and the lovely Isis, which flows beside it through meadows of exquisite verdure, is spread forth into a placid expanse of waters, which reflects its majestic assemblage of towers, and spires, and domes, embosomed among aged trees.

I enjoyed this scene, and yet my enjoyment was embittered both by the memory of the past and the anticipation of the future. I was formed for peaceful happiness. During my youthful days discontent never visited my mind, and if I was ever overcome by ennui, the sight of what is beautiful in nature or the study of what is excellent and sublime in the productions of man could always interest my heart and communicate elasticity to my spirits. But I am a blasted tree; the bolt has entered my soul; and I felt then that I should survive to exhibit what I shall soon cease to be—a miserable spectacle of wrecked humanity, pitiable to others and intolerable to myself.

We passed a considerable period at Oxford, rambling among its environs and endeavouring to identify every spot which might relate to the most animating epoch of English history. Our little voyages of discovery were often prolonged by the successive objects that presented themselves. We visited the tomb of the illustrious Hampden and the field on which that patriot fell. For a moment my soul was elevated from its debasing and miserable fears to contemplate the divine ideas of liberty and self sacrifice of which these sights were the monuments and the remembrancers. For an instant I dared to shake off my chains and look around me with a free and lofty spirit, but the iron had eaten into my flesh, and I sank again, trembling and hopeless, into my miserable self.

We left Oxford with regret and proceeded to Matlock, which was our next place of rest. The country in the neighbourhood of this village resembled, to a greater degree, the scenery of Switzerland; but everything is on a lower scale, and the green hills want the crown of distant white Alps which always attend on the piny mountains of my native country. We visited the wondrous cave and the little cabinets of natural history, where the curiosities are disposed in the same manner as in the collections at Servox and Chamounix. The latter name made me tremble when pronounced by Henry, and I hastened to quit Matlock, with which that terrible scene was thus associated.

From Derby, still journeying northwards, we passed two months in Cumberland and Westmorland. I could now almost fancy myself among the Swiss mountains. The little patches of snow which yet lingered on the northern sides of the mountains, the lakes, and the dashing of the rocky streams were all familiar and dear sights to me. Here also we made some acquaintances, who almost contrived to cheat me into happiness. The delight of Clerval was proportionably greater than mine; his mind expanded

in the company of men of talent, and he found in his own nature greater capacities and resources than he could have imagined himself to have possessed while he associated with his inferiors. “I could pass my life here,” said he to me; “and among these mountains I should scarcely regret Switzerland and the Rhine.”

But he found that a traveller’s life is one that includes much pain amidst its enjoyments. His feelings are forever on the stretch; and when he begins to sink into repose, he finds himself obliged to quit that on which he rests in pleasure for something new, which again engages his attention, and which also he forsakes for other novelties.

We had scarcely visited the various lakes of Cumberland and Westmorland and conceived an affection for some of the inhabitants when the period of our appointment with our Scotch friend approached, and we left them to travel on. For my own part I was not sorry. I had now neglected my promise for some time, and I feared the effects of the daemon’s disappointment. He might remain in Switzerland and wreak his vengeance on my relatives. This idea pursued me and tormented me at every moment from which I might otherwise have snatched repose and peace. I waited for my letters with feverish impatience; if they were delayed I was miserable and overcome by a thousand fears; and when they arrived and I saw the superscription of Elizabeth or my father, I hardly dared to read and ascertain my fate. Sometimes I thought that the fiend followed me and might expedite my remissness by murdering my companion. When these thoughts possessed me, I would not quit Henry for a moment, but followed him as his shadow, to protect him from the fancied rage of his destroyer. I felt as if I had committed some great crime, the consciousness of which haunted me. I was guiltless, but I had indeed drawn down a horrible curse upon my head, as mortal as that of crime.

I visited Edinburgh with languid eyes and mind; and yet that city might have interested the most unfortunate being. Clerval did not like it so well as Oxford, for the antiquity of the latter city was more pleasing to him. But the beauty and regularity of the new town of Edinburgh, its romantic castle and its environs, the most delightful in the world, Arthur’s Seat, St. Bernard’s Well, and the Pentland Hills compensated him for the change and filled him with cheerfulness and admiration. But I was impatient to arrive at the termination of my journey.

We left Edinburgh in a week, passing through Coupar, St. Andrew's, and along the banks of the Tay, to Perth, where our friend expected us. But I was in no mood to laugh and talk with strangers or enter into their feelings or plans with the good humour expected from a guest; and accordingly I told Clerval that I wished to make the tour of Scotland alone. "Do you," said I, "enjoy yourself, and let this be our rendezvous. I may be absent a month or two; but do not interfere with my motions, I entreat you; leave me to peace and solitude for a short time; and when I return, I hope it will be with a lighter heart, more congenial to your own temper."

Henry wished to dissuade me, but seeing me bent on this plan, ceased to remonstrate. He entreated me to write often. "I had rather be with you," he said, "in your solitary rambles, than with these Scotch people, whom I do not know; hasten, then, my dear friend, to return, that I may again feel myself somewhat at home, which I cannot do in your absence."

Having parted from my friend, I determined to visit some remote spot of Scotland and finish my work in solitude. I did not doubt but that the monster followed me and would discover himself to me when I should have finished, that he might receive his companion. With this resolution I traversed the northern highlands and fixed on one of the remotest of the Orkneys as the scene of my labours. It was a place fitted for such a work, being hardly more than a rock whose high sides were continually beaten upon by the waves. The soil was barren, scarcely affording pasture for a few miserable cows, and oatmeal for its inhabitants, which consisted of five persons, whose gaunt and scraggy limbs gave tokens of their miserable fare. Vegetables and bread, when they indulged in such luxuries, and even fresh water, was to be procured from the mainland, which was about five miles distant.

On the whole island there were but three miserable huts, and one of these was vacant when I arrived. This I hired. It contained but two rooms, and these exhibited all the squalidness of the most miserable penury. The thatch had fallen in, the walls were unplastered, and the door was off its hinges. I ordered it to be repaired, bought some furniture, and took possession, an incident which would doubtless have occasioned some surprise had not all the senses of the cottagers been benumbed by want and squalid poverty. As it was, I lived ungazed at and unmolested, hardly thanked for the pittance of food and clothes which I gave, so much does suffering blunt even the coarsest sensations of men.

In this retreat I devoted the morning to labour; but in the evening, when the weather permitted, I walked on the stony beach of the sea to listen to the waves as they roared and dashed at my feet. It was a monotonous yet ever-changing scene. I thought of Switzerland; it was far different from this desolate and appalling landscape. Its hills are covered with vines, and its cottages are scattered thickly in the plains. Its fair lakes reflect a blue and gentle sky, and when troubled by the winds, their tumult is but as the play of a lively infant when compared to the roarings of the giant ocean.

In this manner I distributed my occupations when I first arrived, but as I proceeded in my labour, it became every day more horrible and irksome to me. Sometimes I could not prevail on myself to enter my laboratory for several days, and at other times I toiled day and night in order to complete my work. It was, indeed, a filthy process in which I was engaged. During my first experiment, a kind of enthusiastic frenzy had blinded me to the horror of my employment; my mind was intently fixed on the consummation of my labour, and my eyes were shut to the horror of my proceedings. But now I went to it in cold blood, and my heart often sickened at the work of my hands.

Thus situated, employed in the most detestable occupation, immersed in a solitude where nothing could for an instant call my attention from the actual scene in which I was engaged, my spirits became unequal; I grew restless and nervous. Every moment I feared to meet my persecutor. Sometimes I sat with my eyes fixed on the ground, fearing to raise them lest they should encounter the object which I so much dreaded to behold. I feared to wander from the sight of my fellow creatures lest when alone he should come to claim his companion.

In the mean time I worked on, and my labour was already considerably advanced. I looked towards its completion with a tremulous and eager hope, which I dared not trust myself to question but which was intermixed with obscure forebodings of evil that made my heart sicken in my bosom.

Chapter 20

I sat one evening in my laboratory; the sun had set, and the moon was just rising from the sea; I had not sufficient light for my employment, and I remained idle, in a pause of consideration of whether I should leave my labour for the night or hasten its conclusion by an unremitting attention to it. As I sat, a train of reflection occurred to me which led me to consider the effects of what I was now doing. Three years before, I was engaged in the same manner and had created a fiend whose unparalleled barbarity had desolated my heart and filled it forever with the bitterest remorse. I was now about to form another being of whose dispositions I was alike ignorant; she might become ten thousand times more malignant than her mate and delight, for its own sake, in murder and wretchedness. He had sworn to quit the neighbourhood of man and hide himself in deserts, but she had not; and she, who in all probability was to become a thinking and reasoning animal, might refuse to comply with a compact made before her creation. They might even hate each other; the creature who already lived loathed his own deformity, and might he not conceive a greater abhorrence for it when it came before his eyes in the female form? She also might turn with disgust from him to the superior beauty of man; she might quit him, and he be again alone, exasperated by the fresh provocation of being deserted by one of his own species. Even if they were to leave Europe and inhabit the deserts of the new world, yet one of the first results of those sympathies for which the daemon thirsted would be children, and a race of devils would be propagated upon the earth who might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror. Had I right, for my own benefit, to inflict this curse upon everlasting generations? I had before been moved by the sophisms of the being I had created; I had been struck senseless by his fiendish threats; but now, for the first time, the wickedness of my promise burst upon me; I shuddered to think that future ages might curse me as their pest, whose selfishness had not hesitated to buy its own peace at the price, perhaps, of the existence of the whole human race.

I trembled and my heart failed within me, when, on looking up, I saw by the light of the moon the daemon at the casement. A ghastly grin wrinkled his lips as he gazed on me, where I sat fulfilling the task which he had allotted to me. Yes, he had followed me in my travels; he had loitered in

forests, hid himself in caves, or taken refuge in wide and desert heaths; and he now came to mark my progress and claim the fulfilment of my promise.

As I looked on him, his countenance expressed the utmost extent of malice and treachery. I thought with a sensation of madness on my promise of creating another like to him, and trembling with passion, tore to pieces the thing on which I was engaged. The wretch saw me destroy the creature on whose future existence he depended for happiness, and with a howl of devilish despair and revenge, withdrew.

I left the room, and locking the door, made a solemn vow in my own heart never to resume my labours; and then, with trembling steps, I sought my own apartment. I was alone; none were near me to dissipate the gloom and relieve me from the sickening oppression of the most terrible reveries.

Several hours passed, and I remained near my window gazing on the sea; it was almost motionless, for the winds were hushed, and all nature reposed under the eye of the quiet moon. A few fishing vessels alone specked the water, and now and then the gentle breeze wafted the sound of voices as the fishermen called to one another. I felt the silence, although I was hardly conscious of its extreme profundity, until my ear was suddenly arrested by the paddling of oars near the shore, and a person landed close to my house.

In a few minutes after, I heard the creaking of my door, as if some one endeavoured to open it softly. I trembled from head to foot; I felt a presentiment of who it was and wished to rouse one of the peasants who dwelt in a cottage not far from mine; but I was overcome by the sensation of helplessness, so often felt in frightful dreams, when you in vain endeavour to fly from an impending danger, and was rooted to the spot. Presently I heard the sound of footsteps along the passage; the door opened, and the wretch whom I dreaded appeared.

Shutting the door, he approached me and said in a smothered voice, “You have destroyed the work which you began; what is it that you intend? Do you dare to break your promise? I have endured toil and misery; I left Switzerland with you; I crept along the shores of the Rhine, among its willow islands and over the summits of its hills. I have dwelt many months in the heaths of England and among the deserts of Scotland. I have endured incalculable fatigue, and cold, and hunger; do you dare destroy my hopes?”

“Begone! I do break my promise; never will I create another like yourself, equal in deformity and wickedness.”

“Slave, I before reasoned with you, but you have proved yourself unworthy of my condescension. Remember that I have power; you believe yourself miserable, but I can make you so wretched that the light of day will be hateful to you. You are my creator, but I am your master; obey!”

“The hour of my irresolution is past, and the period of your power is arrived. Your threats cannot move me to do an act of wickedness; but they confirm me in a determination of not creating you a companion in vice. Shall I, in cool blood, set loose upon the earth a daemon whose delight is in death and wretchedness? Begone! I am firm, and your words will only exasperate my rage.”

The monster saw my determination in my face and gnashed his teeth in the impotence of anger. “Shall each man,” cried he, “find a wife for his bosom, and each beast have his mate, and I be alone? I had feelings of affection, and they were requited by detestation and scorn. Man! You may hate, but beware! Your hours will pass in dread and misery, and soon the bolt will fall which must ravish from you your happiness forever. Are you to be happy while I grovel in the intensity of my wretchedness? You can blast my other passions, but revenge remains—revenge, henceforth dearer than light or food! I may die, but first you, my tyrant and tormentor, shall curse the sun that gazes on your misery. Beware, for I am fearless and therefore powerful. I will watch with the wiliness of a snake, that I may sting with its venom. Man, you shall repent of the injuries you inflict.”

“Devil, cease; and do not poison the air with these sounds of malice. I have declared my resolution to you, and I am no coward to bend beneath words. Leave me; I am inexorable.”

“It is well. I go; but remember, I shall be with you on your wedding-night.”

I started forward and exclaimed, “Villain! Before you sign my death-warrant, be sure that you are yourself safe.”

I would have seized him, but he eluded me and quitted the house with precipitation. In a few moments I saw him in his boat, which shot across the waters with an arrowy swiftness and was soon lost amidst the waves.

All was again silent, but his words rang in my ears. I burned with rage to pursue the murderer of my peace and precipitate him into the ocean. I walked up and down my room hastily and perturbed, while my imagination conjured up a thousand images to torment and sting me. Why had I not followed him and closed with him in mortal strife? But I had suffered him

to depart, and he had directed his course towards the mainland. I shuddered to think who might be the next victim sacrificed to his insatiate revenge. And then I thought again of his words—"I WILL BE WITH YOU ON YOUR WEDDING-NIGHT." That, then, was the period fixed for the fulfilment of my destiny. In that hour I should die and at once satisfy and extinguish his malice. The prospect did not move me to fear; yet when I thought of my beloved Elizabeth, of her tears and endless sorrow, when she should find her lover so barbarously snatched from her, tears, the first I had shed for many months, streamed from my eyes, and I resolved not to fall before my enemy without a bitter struggle.

The night passed away, and the sun rose from the ocean; my feelings became calmer, if it may be called calmness when the violence of rage sinks into the depths of despair. I left the house, the horrid scene of the last night's contention, and walked on the beach of the sea, which I almost regarded as an insuperable barrier between me and my fellow creatures; nay, a wish that such should prove the fact stole across me.

I desired that I might pass my life on that barren rock, wearily, it is true, but uninterrupted by any sudden shock of misery. If I returned, it was to be sacrificed or to see those whom I most loved die under the grasp of a daemon whom I had myself created.

I walked about the isle like a restless spectre, separated from all it loved and miserable in the separation. When it became noon, and the sun rose higher, I lay down on the grass and was overpowered by a deep sleep. I had been awake the whole of the preceding night, my nerves were agitated, and my eyes inflamed by watching and misery. The sleep into which I now sank refreshed me; and when I awoke, I again felt as if I belonged to a race of human beings like myself, and I began to reflect upon what had passed with greater composure; yet still the words of the fiend rang in my ears like a death-knell; they appeared like a dream, yet distinct and oppressive as a reality.

The sun had far descended, and I still sat on the shore, satisfying my appetite, which had become ravenous, with an oaten cake, when I saw a fishing-boat land close to me, and one of the men brought me a packet; it contained letters from Geneva, and one from Clerval entreating me to join him. He said that he was wearing away his time fruitlessly where he was, that letters from the friends he had formed in London desired his return to complete the negotiation they had entered into for his Indian enterprise. He

could not any longer delay his departure; but as his journey to London might be followed, even sooner than he now conjectured, by his longer voyage, he entreated me to bestow as much of my society on him as I could spare. He besought me, therefore, to leave my solitary isle and to meet him at Perth, that we might proceed southwards together. This letter in a degree recalled me to life, and I determined to quit my island at the expiration of two days. Yet, before I departed, there was a task to perform, on which I shuddered to reflect; I must pack up my chemical instruments, and for that purpose I must enter the room which had been the scene of my odious work, and I must handle those utensils the sight of which was sickening to me. The next morning, at daybreak, I summoned sufficient courage and unlocked the door of my laboratory. The remains of the half-finished creature, whom I had destroyed, lay scattered on the floor, and I almost felt as if I had mangled the living flesh of a human being. I paused to collect myself and then entered the chamber. With trembling hand I conveyed the instruments out of the room, but I reflected that I ought not to leave the relics of my work to excite the horror and suspicion of the peasants; and I accordingly put them into a basket, with a great quantity of stones, and laying them up, determined to throw them into the sea that very night; and in the meantime I sat upon the beach, employed in cleaning and arranging my chemical apparatus.

Nothing could be more complete than the alteration that had taken place in my feelings since the night of the appearance of the daemon. I had before regarded my promise with a gloomy despair as a thing that, with whatever consequences, must be fulfilled; but I now felt as if a film had been taken from before my eyes and that I for the first time saw clearly. The idea of renewing my labours did not for one instant occur to me; the threat I had heard weighed on my thoughts, but I did not reflect that a voluntary act of mine could avert it. I had resolved in my own mind that to create another like the fiend I had first made would be an act of the basest and most atrocious selfishness, and I banished from my mind every thought that could lead to a different conclusion.

Between two and three in the morning the moon rose; and I then, putting my basket aboard a little skiff, sailed out about four miles from the shore. The scene was perfectly solitary; a few boats were returning towards land, but I sailed away from them. I felt as if I was about the commission of a dreadful crime and avoided with shuddering anxiety any encounter with my

fellow creatures. At one time the moon, which had before been clear, was suddenly overspread by a thick cloud, and I took advantage of the moment of darkness and cast my basket into the sea; I listened to the gurgling sound as it sank and then sailed away from the spot. The sky became clouded, but the air was pure, although chilled by the northeast breeze that was then rising. But it refreshed me and filled me with such agreeable sensations that I resolved to prolong my stay on the water, and fixing the rudder in a direct position, stretched myself at the bottom of the boat. Clouds hid the moon, everything was obscure, and I heard only the sound of the boat as its keel cut through the waves; the murmur lulled me, and in a short time I slept soundly. I do not know how long I remained in this situation, but when I awoke I found that the sun had already mounted considerably. The wind was high, and the waves continually threatened the safety of my little skiff. I found that the wind was northeast and must have driven me far from the coast from which I had embarked. I endeavoured to change my course but quickly found that if I again made the attempt the boat would be instantly filled with water. Thus situated, my only resource was to drive before the wind. I confess that I felt a few sensations of terror. I had no compass with me and was so slenderly acquainted with the geography of this part of the world that the sun was of little benefit to me. I might be driven into the wide Atlantic and feel all the tortures of starvation or be swallowed up in the immeasurable waters that roared and buffeted around me. I had already been out many hours and felt the torment of a burning thirst, a prelude to my other sufferings. I looked on the heavens, which were covered by clouds that flew before the wind, only to be replaced by others; I looked upon the sea; it was to be my grave. “Fiend,” I exclaimed, “your task is already fulfilled!” I thought of Elizabeth, of my father, and of Clerval—all left behind, on whom the monster might satisfy his sanguinary and merciless passions. This idea plunged me into a reverie so despairing and frightful that even now, when the scene is on the point of closing before me forever, I shudder to reflect on it.

Some hours passed thus; but by degrees, as the sun declined towards the horizon, the wind died away into a gentle breeze and the sea became free from breakers. But these gave place to a heavy swell; I felt sick and hardly able to hold the rudder, when suddenly I saw a line of high land towards the south.

Almost spent, as I was, by fatigue and the dreadful suspense I endured for several hours, this sudden certainty of life rushed like a flood of warm joy to my heart, and tears gushed from my eyes.

How mutable are our feelings, and how strange is that clinging love we have of life even in the excess of misery! I constructed another sail with a part of my dress and eagerly steered my course towards the land. It had a wild and rocky appearance, but as I approached nearer I easily perceived the traces of cultivation. I saw vessels near the shore and found myself suddenly transported back to the neighbourhood of civilized man. I carefully traced the windings of the land and hailed a steeple which I at length saw issuing from behind a small promontory. As I was in a state of extreme debility, I resolved to sail directly towards the town, as a place where I could most easily procure nourishment. Fortunately I had money with me.

As I turned the promontory I perceived a small neat town and a good harbour, which I entered, my heart bounding with joy at my unexpected escape.

As I was occupied in fixing the boat and arranging the sails, several people crowded towards the spot. They seemed much surprised at my appearance, but instead of offering me any assistance, whispered together with gestures that at any other time might have produced in me a slight sensation of alarm. As it was, I merely remarked that they spoke English, and I therefore addressed them in that language. “My good friends,” said I, “will you be so kind as to tell me the name of this town and inform me where I am?”

“You will know that soon enough,” replied a man with a hoarse voice. “Maybe you are come to a place that will not prove much to your taste, but you will not be consulted as to your quarters, I promise you.”

I was exceedingly surprised on receiving so rude an answer from a stranger, and I was also disconcerted on perceiving the frowning and angry countenances of his companions. “Why do you answer me so roughly?” I replied. “Surely it is not the custom of Englishmen to receive strangers so inhospitably.”

“I do not know,” said the man, “what the custom of the English may be, but it is the custom of the Irish to hate villains.” While this strange dialogue continued, I perceived the crowd rapidly increase. Their faces expressed a

mixture of curiosity and anger, which annoyed and in some degree alarmed me.

I inquired the way to the inn, but no one replied. I then moved forward, and a murmuring sound arose from the crowd as they followed and surrounded me, when an ill-looking man approaching tapped me on the shoulder and said, “Come, sir, you must follow me to Mr. Kirwin’s to give an account of yourself.”

“Who is Mr. Kirwin? Why am I to give an account of myself? Is not this a free country?”

“Ay, sir, free enough for honest folks. Mr. Kirwin is a magistrate, and you are to give an account of the death of a gentleman who was found murdered here last night.”

This answer startled me, but I presently recovered myself. I was innocent; that could easily be proved; accordingly I followed my conductor in silence and was led to one of the best houses in the town. I was ready to sink from fatigue and hunger, but being surrounded by a crowd, I thought it politic to rouse all my strength, that no physical debility might be construed into apprehension or conscious guilt. Little did I then expect the calamity that was in a few moments to overwhelm me and extinguish in horror and despair all fear of ignominy or death. I must pause here, for it requires all my fortitude to recall the memory of the frightful events which I am about to relate, in proper detail, to my recollection.

Chapter 21

I was soon introduced into the presence of the magistrate, an old benevolent man with calm and mild manners. He looked upon me, however, with some degree of severity, and then, turning towards my conductors, he asked who appeared as witnesses on this occasion.

About half a dozen men came forward; and, one being selected by the magistrate, he deposed that he had been out fishing the night before with his son and brother-in-law, Daniel Nugent, when, about ten o'clock, they observed a strong northerly blast rising, and they accordingly put in for port. It was a very dark night, as the moon had not yet risen; they did not land at the harbour, but, as they had been accustomed, at a creek about two miles below. He walked on first, carrying a part of the fishing tackle, and his companions followed him at some distance.

As he was proceeding along the sands, he struck his foot against something and fell at his length on the ground. His companions came up to assist him, and by the light of their lantern they found that he had fallen on the body of a man, who was to all appearance dead. Their first supposition was that it was the corpse of some person who had been drowned and was thrown on shore by the waves, but on examination they found that the clothes were not wet and even that the body was not then cold. They instantly carried it to the cottage of an old woman near the spot and endeavoured, but in vain, to restore it to life. It appeared to be a handsome young man, about five and twenty years of age. He had apparently been strangled, for there was no sign of any violence except the black mark of fingers on his neck.

The first part of this deposition did not in the least interest me, but when the mark of the fingers was mentioned I remembered the murder of my brother and felt myself extremely agitated; my limbs trembled, and a mist came over my eyes, which obliged me to lean on a chair for support. The magistrate observed me with a keen eye and of course drew an unfavourable augury from my manner.

The son confirmed his father's account, but when Daniel Nugent was called he swore positively that just before the fall of his companion, he saw a boat, with a single man in it, at a short distance from the shore; and as far as he could judge by the light of a few stars, it was the same boat in which I

had just landed. A woman deposed that she lived near the beach and was standing at the door of her cottage, waiting for the return of the fishermen, about an hour before she heard of the discovery of the body, when she saw a boat with only one man in it push off from that part of the shore where the corpse was afterwards found.

Another woman confirmed the account of the fishermen having brought the body into her house; it was not cold. They put it into a bed and rubbed it, and Daniel went to the town for an apothecary, but life was quite gone.

Several other men were examined concerning my landing, and they agreed that, with the strong north wind that had arisen during the night, it was very probable that I had beaten about for many hours and had been obliged to return nearly to the same spot from which I had departed. Besides, they observed that it appeared that I had brought the body from another place, and it was likely that as I did not appear to know the shore, I might have put into the harbour ignorant of the distance of the town of —— from the place where I had deposited the corpse.

Mr. Kirwin, on hearing this evidence, desired that I should be taken into the room where the body lay for interment, that it might be observed what effect the sight of it would produce upon me. This idea was probably suggested by the extreme agitation I had exhibited when the mode of the murder had been described. I was accordingly conducted, by the magistrate and several other persons, to the inn. I could not help being struck by the strange coincidences that had taken place during this eventful night; but, knowing that I had been conversing with several persons in the island I had inhabited about the time that the body had been found, I was perfectly tranquil as to the consequences of the affair. I entered the room where the corpse lay and was led up to the coffin. How can I describe my sensations on beholding it? I feel yet parched with horror, nor can I reflect on that terrible moment without shuddering and agony. The examination, the presence of the magistrate and witnesses, passed like a dream from my memory when I saw the lifeless form of Henry Clerval stretched before me. I gasped for breath, and throwing myself on the body, I exclaimed, “Have my murderous machinations deprived you also, my dearest Henry, of life? Two I have already destroyed; other victims await their destiny; but you, Clerval, my friend, my benefactor—”

The human frame could no longer support the agonies that I endured, and I was carried out of the room in strong convulsions. A fever succeeded

to this. I lay for two months on the point of death; my ravings, as I afterwards heard, were frightful; I called myself the murderer of William, of Justine, and of Clerval. Sometimes I entreated my attendants to assist me in the destruction of the fiend by whom I was tormented; and at others I felt the fingers of the monster already grasping my neck, and screamed aloud with agony and terror. Fortunately, as I spoke my native language, Mr. Kirwin alone understood me; but my gestures and bitter cries were sufficient to affright the other witnesses. Why did I not die? More miserable than man ever was before, why did I not sink into forgetfulness and rest? Death snatches away many blooming children, the only hopes of their doting parents; how many brides and youthful lovers have been one day in the bloom of health and hope, and the next a prey for worms and the decay of the tomb! Of what materials was I made that I could thus resist so many shocks, which, like the turning of the wheel, continually renewed the torture?

But I was doomed to live and in two months found myself as awaking from a dream, in a prison, stretched on a wretched bed, surrounded by jailers, turnkeys, bolts, and all the miserable apparatus of a dungeon. It was morning, I remember, when I thus awoke to understanding; I had forgotten the particulars of what had happened and only felt as if some great misfortune had suddenly overwhelmed me; but when I looked around and saw the barred windows and the squalidness of the room in which I was, all flashed across my memory and I groaned bitterly.

This sound disturbed an old woman who was sleeping in a chair beside me. She was a hired nurse, the wife of one of the turnkeys, and her countenance expressed all those bad qualities which often characterize that class. The lines of her face were hard and rude, like that of persons accustomed to see without sympathizing in sights of misery. Her tone expressed her entire indifference; she addressed me in English, and the voice struck me as one that I had heard during my sufferings. “Are you better now, sir?” said she.

I replied in the same language, with a feeble voice, “I believe I am; but if it be all true, if indeed I did not dream, I am sorry that I am still alive to feel this misery and horror.”

“For that matter,” replied the old woman, “if you mean about the gentleman you murdered, I believe that it were better for you if you were dead, for I fancy it will go hard with you! However, that’s none of my

business; I am sent to nurse you and get you well; I do my duty with a safe conscience; it were well if everybody did the same."

I turned with loathing from the woman who could utter so unfeeling a speech to a person just saved, on the very edge of death; but I felt languid and unable to reflect on all that had passed. The whole series of my life appeared to me as a dream; I sometimes doubted if indeed it were all true, for it never presented itself to my mind with the force of reality.

As the images that floated before me became more distinct, I grew feverish; a darkness pressed around me; no one was near me who soothed me with the gentle voice of love; no dear hand supported me. The physician came and prescribed medicines, and the old woman prepared them for me; but utter carelessness was visible in the first, and the expression of brutality was strongly marked in the visage of the second. Who could be interested in the fate of a murderer but the hangman who would gain his fee?

These were my first reflections, but I soon learned that Mr. Kirwin had shown me extreme kindness. He had caused the best room in the prison to be prepared for me (wretched indeed was the best); and it was he who had provided a physician and a nurse. It is true, he seldom came to see me, for although he ardently desired to relieve the sufferings of every human creature, he did not wish to be present at the agonies and miserable ravings of a murderer. He came, therefore, sometimes to see that I was not neglected, but his visits were short and with long intervals. One day, while I was gradually recovering, I was seated in a chair, my eyes half open and my cheeks livid like those in death. I was overcome by gloom and misery and often reflected I had better seek death than desire to remain in a world which to me was replete with wretchedness. At one time I considered whether I should not declare myself guilty and suffer the penalty of the law, less innocent than poor Justine had been. Such were my thoughts when the door of my apartment was opened and Mr. Kirwin entered. His countenance expressed sympathy and compassion; he drew a chair close to mine and addressed me in French, "I fear that this place is very shocking to you; can I do anything to make you more comfortable?"

"I thank you, but all that you mention is nothing to me; on the whole earth there is no comfort which I am capable of receiving."

"I know that the sympathy of a stranger can be but of little relief to one borne down as you are by so strange a misfortune. But you will, I hope,

soon quit this melancholy abode, for doubtless evidence can easily be brought to free you from the criminal charge."

"That is my least concern; I am, by a course of strange events, become the most miserable of mortals. Persecuted and tortured as I am and have been, can death be any evil to me?"

"Nothing indeed could be more unfortunate and agonizing than the strange chances that have lately occurred. You were thrown, by some surprising accident, on this shore, renowned for its hospitality, seized immediately, and charged with murder. The first sight that was presented to your eyes was the body of your friend, murdered in so unaccountable a manner and placed, as it were, by some fiend across your path."

As Mr. Kirwin said this, notwithstanding the agitation I endured on this retrospect of my sufferings, I also felt considerable surprise at the knowledge he seemed to possess concerning me. I suppose some astonishment was exhibited in my countenance, for Mr. Kirwin hastened to say, "Immediately upon your being taken ill, all the papers that were on your person were brought me, and I examined them that I might discover some trace by which I could send to your relations an account of your misfortune and illness. I found several letters, and, among others, one which I discovered from its commencement to be from your father. I instantly wrote to Geneva; nearly two months have elapsed since the departure of my letter. But you are ill; even now you tremble; you are unfit for agitation of any kind."

"This suspense is a thousand times worse than the most horrible event; tell me what new scene of death has been acted, and whose murder I am now to lament?"

"Your family is perfectly well," said Mr. Kirwin with gentleness; "and someone, a friend, is come to visit you."

I know not by what chain of thought the idea presented itself, but it instantly darted into my mind that the murderer had come to mock at my misery and taunt me with the death of Clerval, as a new incitement for me to comply with his hellish desires. I put my hand before my eyes, and cried out in agony, "Oh! Take him away! I cannot see him; for God's sake, do not let him enter!"

Mr. Kirwin regarded me with a troubled countenance. He could not help regarding my exclamation as a presumption of my guilt and said in rather a severe tone, "I should have thought, young man, that the presence of your

father would have been welcome instead of inspiring such violent repugnance."

"My father!" cried I, while every feature and every muscle was relaxed from anguish to pleasure. "Is my father indeed come? How kind, how very kind! But where is he, why does he not hasten to me?"

My change of manner surprised and pleased the magistrate; perhaps he thought that my former exclamation was a momentary return of delirium, and now he instantly resumed his former benevolence. He rose and quitted the room with my nurse, and in a moment my father entered it.

Nothing, at this moment, could have given me greater pleasure than the arrival of my father. I stretched out my hand to him and cried, "Are you, then, safe—and Elizabeth—and Ernest?" My father calmed me with assurances of their welfare and endeavoured, by dwelling on these subjects so interesting to my heart, to raise my desponding spirits; but he soon felt that a prison cannot be the abode of cheerfulness.

"What a place is this that you inhabit, my son!" said he, looking mournfully at the barred windows and wretched appearance of the room. "You travelled to seek happiness, but a fatality seems to pursue you. And poor Clerval—"

The name of my unfortunate and murdered friend was an agitation too great to be endured in my weak state; I shed tears. "Alas! Yes, my father," replied I; "some destiny of the most horrible kind hangs over me, and I must live to fulfil it, or surely I should have died on the coffin of Henry."

We were not allowed to converse for any length of time, for the precarious state of my health rendered every precaution necessary that could ensure tranquillity. Mr. Kirwin came in and insisted that my strength should not be exhausted by too much exertion. But the appearance of my father was to me like that of my good angel, and I gradually recovered my health.

As my sickness quitted me, I was absorbed by a gloomy and black melancholy that nothing could dissipate. The image of Clerval was forever before me, ghastly and murdered. More than once the agitation into which these reflections threw me made my friends dread a dangerous relapse. Alas! Why did they preserve so miserable and detested a life? It was surely that I might fulfil my destiny, which is now drawing to a close. Soon, oh, very soon, will death extinguish these throbbings and relieve me from the mighty weight of anguish that bears me to the dust; and, in executing the

award of justice, I shall also sink to rest. Then the appearance of death was distant, although the wish was ever present to my thoughts; and I often sat for hours motionless and speechless, wishing for some mighty revolution that might bury me and my destroyer in its ruins.

The season of the assizes approached. I had already been three months in prison, and although I was still weak and in continual danger of a relapse, I was obliged to travel nearly a hundred miles to the country town where the court was held. Mr. Kirwin charged himself with every care of collecting witnesses and arranging my defence. I was spared the disgrace of appearing publicly as a criminal, as the case was not brought before the court that decides on life and death. The grand jury rejected the bill, on its being proved that I was on the Orkney Islands at the hour the body of my friend was found; and a fortnight after my removal I was liberated from prison.

My father was enraptured on finding me freed from the vexations of a criminal charge, that I was again allowed to breathe the fresh atmosphere and permitted to return to my native country. I did not participate in these feelings, for to me the walls of a dungeon or a palace were alike hateful. The cup of life was poisoned forever, and although the sun shone upon me, as upon the happy and gay of heart, I saw around me nothing but a dense and frightful darkness, penetrated by no light but the glimmer of two eyes that glared upon me. Sometimes they were the expressive eyes of Henry, languishing in death, the dark orbs nearly covered by the lids and the long black lashes that fringed them; sometimes it was the watery, clouded eyes of the monster, as I first saw them in my chamber at Ingolstadt.

My father tried to awaken in me the feelings of affection. He talked of Geneva, which I should soon visit, of Elizabeth and Ernest; but these words only drew deep groans from me. Sometimes, indeed, I felt a wish for happiness and thought with melancholy delight of my beloved cousin or longed, with a devouring maladie du pays, to see once more the blue lake and rapid Rhone, that had been so dear to me in early childhood; but my general state of feeling was a torpor in which a prison was as welcome a residence as the divinest scene in nature; and these fits were seldom interrupted but by paroxysms of anguish and despair. At these moments I often endeavoured to put an end to the existence I loathed, and it required unceasing attendance and vigilance to restrain me from committing some dreadful act of violence.

Yet one duty remained to me, the recollection of which finally triumphed over my selfish despair. It was necessary that I should return without delay to Geneva, there to watch over the lives of those I so fondly loved and to lie in wait for the murderer, that if any chance led me to the place of his concealment, or if he dared again to blast me by his presence, I might, with unfailing aim, put an end to the existence of the monstrous image which I had endued with the mockery of a soul still more monstrous. My father still desired to delay our departure, fearful that I could not sustain the fatigues of a journey, for I was a shattered wreck—the shadow of a human being. My strength was gone. I was a mere skeleton, and fever night and day preyed upon my wasted frame. Still, as I urged our leaving Ireland with such inquietude and impatience, my father thought it best to yield. We took our passage on board a vessel bound for Havre-de-Grace and sailed with a fair wind from the Irish shores. It was midnight. I lay on the deck looking at the stars and listening to the dashing of the waves. I hailed the darkness that shut Ireland from my sight, and my pulse beat with a feverish joy when I reflected that I should soon see Geneva. The past appeared to me in the light of a frightful dream; yet the vessel in which I was, the wind that blew me from the detested shore of Ireland, and the sea which surrounded me told me too forcibly that I was deceived by no vision and that Clerval, my friend and dearest companion, had fallen a victim to me and the monster of my creation. I repassed, in my memory, my whole life—my quiet happiness while residing with my family in Geneva, the death of my mother, and my departure for Ingolstadt. I remembered, shuddering, the mad enthusiasm that hurried me on to the creation of my hideous enemy, and I called to mind the night in which he first lived. I was unable to pursue the train of thought; a thousand feelings pressed upon me, and I wept bitterly. Ever since my recovery from the fever I had been in the custom of taking every night a small quantity of laudanum, for it was by means of this drug only that I was enabled to gain the rest necessary for the preservation of life. Oppressed by the recollection of my various misfortunes, I now swallowed double my usual quantity and soon slept profoundly. But sleep did not afford me respite from thought and misery; my dreams presented a thousand objects that scared me. Towards morning I was possessed by a kind of nightmare; I felt the fiend’s grasp in my neck and could not free myself from it; groans and cries rang in my ears. My father, who was watching over me, perceiving my restlessness, awoke me; the dashing waves were

around, the cloudy sky above, the fiend was not here: a sense of security, a feeling that a truce was established between the present hour and the irresistible, disastrous future imparted to me a kind of calm forgetfulness, of which the human mind is by its structure peculiarly susceptible.

Chapter 22

The voyage came to an end. We landed, and proceeded to Paris. I soon found that I had overtaxed my strength and that I must repose before I could continue my journey. My father's care and attentions were indefatigable, but he did not know the origin of my sufferings and sought erroneous methods to remedy the incurable ill. He wished me to seek amusement in society. I abhorred the face of man. Oh, not abhorred! They were my brethren, my fellow beings, and I felt attracted even to the most repulsive among them, as to creatures of an angelic nature and celestial mechanism. But I felt that I had no right to share their intercourse. I had unchained an enemy among them whose joy it was to shed their blood and to revel in their groans. How they would, each and all, abhor me and hunt me from the world did they know my unhallowed acts and the crimes which had their source in me!

My father yielded at length to my desire to avoid society and strove by various arguments to banish my despair. Sometimes he thought that I felt deeply the degradation of being obliged to answer a charge of murder, and he endeavoured to prove to me the futility of pride.

"Alas! My father," said I, "how little do you know me. Human beings, their feelings and passions, would indeed be degraded if such a wretch as I felt pride. Justine, poor unhappy Justine, was as innocent as I, and she suffered the same charge; she died for it; and I am the cause of this—I murdered her. William, Justine, and Henry—they all died by my hands."

My father had often, during my imprisonment, heard me make the same assertion; when I thus accused myself, he sometimes seemed to desire an explanation, and at others he appeared to consider it as the offspring of delirium, and that, during my illness, some idea of this kind had presented itself to my imagination, the remembrance of which I preserved in my convalescence.

I avoided explanation and maintained a continual silence concerning the wretch I had created. I had a persuasion that I should be supposed mad, and this in itself would forever have chained my tongue. But, besides, I could not bring myself to disclose a secret which would fill my hearer with consternation and make fear and unnatural horror the inmates of his breast. I checked, therefore, my impatient thirst for sympathy and was silent when I

would have given the world to have confided the fatal secret. Yet, still, words like those I have recorded would burst uncontrollably from me. I could offer no explanation of them, but their truth in part relieved the burden of my mysterious woe. Upon this occasion my father said, with an expression of unbounded wonder, “My dearest Victor, what infatuation is this? My dear son, I entreat you never to make such an assertion again.”

“I am not mad,” I cried energetically; “the sun and the heavens, who have viewed my operations, can bear witness of my truth. I am the assassin of those most innocent victims; they died by my machinations. A thousand times would I have shed my own blood, drop by drop, to have saved their lives; but I could not, my father, indeed I could not sacrifice the whole human race.”

The conclusion of this speech convinced my father that my ideas were deranged, and he instantly changed the subject of our conversation and endeavoured to alter the course of my thoughts. He wished as much as possible to obliterate the memory of the scenes that had taken place in Ireland and never alluded to them or suffered me to speak of my misfortunes.

As time passed away I became more calm; misery had her dwelling in my heart, but I no longer talked in the same incoherent manner of my own crimes; sufficient for me was the consciousness of them. By the utmost self-violence I curbed the imperious voice of wretchedness, which sometimes desired to declare itself to the whole world, and my manners were calmer and more composed than they had ever been since my journey to the sea of ice. A few days before we left Paris on our way to Switzerland, I received the following letter from Elizabeth:

“My dear Friend,

“It gave me the greatest pleasure to receive a letter from my uncle dated at Paris; you are no longer at a formidable distance, and I may hope to see you in less than a fortnight. My poor cousin, how much you must have suffered! I expect to see you looking even more ill than when you quitted Geneva. This winter has been passed most miserably, tortured as I have been by anxious suspense; yet I hope to see peace in your countenance and to find that your heart is not totally void of comfort and tranquillity.

“Yet I fear that the same feelings now exist that made you so miserable a year ago, even perhaps augmented by time. I would not disturb you at this

period, when so many misfortunes weigh upon you, but a conversation that I had with my uncle previous to his departure renders some explanation necessary before we meet. Explanation! You may possibly say, What can Elizabeth have to explain? If you really say this, my questions are answered and all my doubts satisfied. But you are distant from me, and it is possible that you may dread and yet be pleased with this explanation; and in a probability of this being the case, I dare not any longer postpone writing what, during your absence, I have often wished to express to you but have never had the courage to begin.

"You well know, Victor, that our union had been the favourite plan of your parents ever since our infancy. We were told this when young, and taught to look forward to it as an event that would certainly take place. We were affectionate playfellows during childhood, and, I believe, dear and valued friends to one another as we grew older. But as brother and sister often entertain a lively affection towards each other without desiring a more intimate union, may not such also be our case? Tell me, dearest Victor. Answer me, I conjure you by our mutual happiness, with simple truth—Do you not love another?

"You have travelled; you have spent several years of your life at Ingolstadt; and I confess to you, my friend, that when I saw you last autumn so unhappy, flying to solitude from the society of every creature, I could not help supposing that you might regret our connection and believe yourself bound in honour to fulfil the wishes of your parents, although they opposed themselves to your inclinations. But this is false reasoning. I confess to you, my friend, that I love you and that in my airy dreams of futurity you have been my constant friend and companion. But it is your happiness I desire as well as my own when I declare to you that our marriage would render me eternally miserable unless it were the dictate of your own free choice. Even now I weep to think that, borne down as you are by the cruellest misfortunes, you may stifle, by the word 'honour,' all hope of that love and happiness which would alone restore you to yourself. I, who have so disinterested an affection for you, may increase your miseries tenfold by being an obstacle to your wishes. Ah! Victor, be assured that your cousin and playmate has too sincere a love for you not to be made miserable by this supposition. Be happy, my friend; and if you obey me in this one request, remain satisfied that nothing on earth will have the power to interrupt my tranquillity.

“Do not let this letter disturb you; do not answer tomorrow, or the next day, or even until you come, if it will give you pain. My uncle will send me news of your health, and if I see but one smile on your lips when we meet, occasioned by this or any other exertion of mine, I shall need no other happiness.

“Elizabeth Lavenza

“Geneva, May 18th, 17—”

This letter revived in my memory what I had before forgotten, the threat of the fiend—”I WILL BE WITH YOU ON YOUR WEDDING-NIGHT!” Such was my sentence, and on that night would the daemon employ every art to destroy me and tear me from the glimpse of happiness which promised partly to console my sufferings. On that night he had determined to consummate his crimes by my death. Well, be it so; a deadly struggle would then assuredly take place, in which if he were victorious I should be at peace and his power over me be at an end. If he were vanquished, I should be a free man. Alas! What freedom? Such as the peasant enjoys when his family have been massacred before his eyes, his cottage burnt, his lands laid waste, and he is turned adrift, homeless, penniless, and alone, but free. Such would be my liberty except that in my Elizabeth I possessed a treasure, alas, balanced by those horrors of remorse and guilt which would pursue me until death.

Sweet and beloved Elizabeth! I read and reread her letter, and some softened feelings stole into my heart and dared to whisper paradisiacal dreams of love and joy; but the apple was already eaten, and the angel’s arm bared to drive me from all hope. Yet I would die to make her happy. If the monster executed his threat, death was inevitable; yet, again, I considered whether my marriage would hasten my fate. My destruction might indeed arrive a few months sooner, but if my torturer should suspect that I postponed it, influenced by his menaces, he would surely find other and perhaps more dreadful means of revenge.

He had vowed TO BE WITH ME ON MY WEDDING-NIGHT, yet he did not consider that threat as binding him to peace in the meantime, for as if to show me that he was not yet satiated with blood, he had murdered Clerval immediately after the enunciation of his threats. I resolved, therefore, that if my immediate union with my cousin would conduce either

to hers or my father's happiness, my adversary's designs against my life should not retard it a single hour.

In this state of mind I wrote to Elizabeth. My letter was calm and affectionate. "I fear, my beloved girl," I said, "little happiness remains for us on earth; yet all that I may one day enjoy is centred in you. Chase away your idle fears; to you alone do I consecrate my life and my endeavours for contentment. I have one secret, Elizabeth, a dreadful one; when revealed to you, it will chill your frame with horror, and then, far from being surprised at my misery, you will only wonder that I survive what I have endured. I will confide this tale of misery and terror to you the day after our marriage shall take place, for, my sweet cousin, there must be perfect confidence between us. But until then, I conjure you, do not mention or allude to it. This I most earnestly entreat, and I know you will comply."

In about a week after the arrival of Elizabeth's letter we returned to Geneva. The sweet girl welcomed me with warm affection, yet tears were in her eyes as she beheld my emaciated frame and feverish cheeks. I saw a change in her also. She was thinner and had lost much of that heavenly vivacity that had before charmed me; but her gentleness and soft looks of compassion made her a more fit companion for one blasted and miserable as I was. The tranquillity which I now enjoyed did not endure. Memory brought madness with it, and when I thought of what had passed, a real insanity possessed me; sometimes I was furious and burnt with rage, sometimes low and despondent. I neither spoke nor looked at anyone, but sat motionless, bewildered by the multitude of miseries that overcame me.

Elizabeth alone had the power to draw me from these fits; her gentle voice would soothe me when transported by passion and inspire me with human feelings when sunk in torpor. She wept with me and for me. When reason returned, she would remonstrate and endeavour to inspire me with resignation. Ah! It is well for the unfortunate to be resigned, but for the guilty there is no peace. The agonies of remorse poison the luxury there is otherwise sometimes found in indulging the excess of grief. Soon after my arrival my father spoke of my immediate marriage with Elizabeth. I remained silent.

"Have you, then, some other attachment?"

"None on earth. I love Elizabeth and look forward to our union with delight. Let the day therefore be fixed; and on it I will consecrate myself, in life or death, to the happiness of my cousin."

“My dear Victor, do not speak thus. Heavy misfortunes have befallen us, but let us only cling closer to what remains and transfer our love for those whom we have lost to those who yet live. Our circle will be small but bound close by the ties of affection and mutual misfortune. And when time shall have softened your despair, new and dear objects of care will be born to replace those of whom we have been so cruelly deprived.”

Such were the lessons of my father. But to me the remembrance of the threat returned; nor can you wonder that, omnipotent as the fiend had yet been in his deeds of blood, I should almost regard him as invincible, and that when he had pronounced the words “I SHALL BE WITH YOU ON YOUR WEDDING-NIGHT,” I should regard the threatened fate as unavoidable. But death was no evil to me if the loss of Elizabeth were balanced with it, and I therefore, with a contented and even cheerful countenance, agreed with my father that if my cousin would consent, the ceremony should take place in ten days, and thus put, as I imagined, the seal to my fate.

Great God! If for one instant I had thought what might be the hellish intention of my fiendish adversary, I would rather have banished myself forever from my native country and wandered a friendless outcast over the earth than have consented to this miserable marriage. But, as if possessed of magic powers, the monster had blinded me to his real intentions; and when I thought that I had prepared only my own death, I hastened that of a far dearer victim.

As the period fixed for our marriage drew nearer, whether from cowardice or a prophetic feeling, I felt my heart sink within me. But I concealed my feelings by an appearance of hilarity that brought smiles and joy to the countenance of my father, but hardly deceived the ever-watchful and nicer eye of Elizabeth. She looked forward to our union with placid contentment, not unmingled with a little fear, which past misfortunes had impressed, that what now appeared certain and tangible happiness might soon dissipate into an airy dream and leave no trace but deep and everlasting regret. Preparations were made for the event, congratulatory visits were received, and all wore a smiling appearance. I shut up, as well as I could, in my own heart the anxiety that preyed there and entered with seeming earnestness into the plans of my father, although they might only serve as the decorations of my tragedy. Through my father’s exertions a part of the inheritance of Elizabeth had been restored to her by the Austrian

government. A small possession on the shores of Como belonged to her. It was agreed that, immediately after our union, we should proceed to Villa Lavenza and spend our first days of happiness beside the beautiful lake near which it stood.

In the meantime I took every precaution to defend my person in case the fiend should openly attack me. I carried pistols and a dagger constantly about me and was ever on the watch to prevent artifice, and by these means gained a greater degree of tranquillity. Indeed, as the period approached, the threat appeared more as a delusion, not to be regarded as worthy to disturb my peace, while the happiness I hoped for in my marriage wore a greater appearance of certainty as the day fixed for its solemnization drew nearer and I heard it continually spoken of as an occurrence which no accident could possibly prevent.

Elizabeth seemed happy; my tranquil demeanour contributed greatly to calm her mind. But on the day that was to fulfil my wishes and my destiny, she was melancholy, and a presentiment of evil pervaded her; and perhaps also she thought of the dreadful secret which I had promised to reveal to her on the following day. My father was in the meantime overjoyed and in the bustle of preparation only recognized in the melancholy of his niece the diffidence of a bride.

After the ceremony was performed a large party assembled at my father's, but it was agreed that Elizabeth and I should commence our journey by water, sleeping that night at Evian and continuing our voyage on the following day. The day was fair, the wind favourable; all smiled on our nuptial embarkation.

Those were the last moments of my life during which I enjoyed the feeling of happiness. We passed rapidly along; the sun was hot, but we were sheltered from its rays by a kind of canopy while we enjoyed the beauty of the scene, sometimes on one side of the lake, where we saw Mont Saleve, the pleasant banks of Montalegre, and at a distance, surmounting all, the beautiful Mont Blanc and the assemblage of snowy mountains that in vain endeavour to emulate her; sometimes coasting the opposite banks, we saw the mighty Jura opposing its dark side to the ambition that would quit its native country, and an almost insurmountable barrier to the invader who should wish to enslave it.

I took the hand of Elizabeth. "You are sorrowful, my love. Ah! If you knew what I have suffered and what I may yet endure, you would

endeavour to let me taste the quiet and freedom from despair that this one day at least permits me to enjoy."

"Be happy, my dear Victor," replied Elizabeth; "there is, I hope, nothing to distress you; and be assured that if a lively joy is not painted in my face, my heart is contented. Something whispers to me not to depend too much on the prospect that is opened before us, but I will not listen to such a sinister voice. Observe how fast we move along and how the clouds, which sometimes obscure and sometimes rise above the dome of Mont Blanc, render this scene of beauty still more interesting. Look also at the innumerable fish that are swimming in the clear waters, where we can distinguish every pebble that lies at the bottom. What a divine day! How happy and serene all nature appears!"

Thus Elizabeth endeavoured to divert her thoughts and mine from all reflection upon melancholy subjects. But her temper was fluctuating; joy for a few instants shone in her eyes, but it continually gave place to distraction and reverie.

The sun sank lower in the heavens; we passed the river Drance and observed its path through the chasms of the higher and the glens of the lower hills. The Alps here come closer to the lake, and we approached the amphitheatre of mountains which forms its eastern boundary. The spire of Evian shone under the woods that surrounded it and the range of mountain above mountain by which it was overhung.

The wind, which had hitherto carried us along with amazing rapidity, sank at sunset to a light breeze; the soft air just ruffled the water and caused a pleasant motion among the trees as we approached the shore, from which it wafted the most delightful scent of flowers and hay. The sun sank beneath the horizon as we landed, and as I touched the shore I felt those cares and fears revive which soon were to clasp me and cling to me forever.

Chapter 23

It was eight o'clock when we landed; we walked for a short time on the shore, enjoying the transitory light, and then retired to the inn and contemplated the lovely scene of waters, woods, and mountains, obscured in darkness, yet still displaying their black outlines.

The wind, which had fallen in the south, now rose with great violence in the west. The moon had reached her summit in the heavens and was beginning to descend; the clouds swept across it swifter than the flight of the vulture and dimmed her rays, while the lake reflected the scene of the busy heavens, rendered still busier by the restless waves that were beginning to rise. Suddenly a heavy storm of rain descended.

I had been calm during the day, but so soon as night obscured the shapes of objects, a thousand fears arose in my mind. I was anxious and watchful, while my right hand grasped a pistol which was hidden in my bosom; every sound terrified me, but I resolved that I would sell my life dearly and not shrink from the conflict until my own life or that of my adversary was extinguished. Elizabeth observed my agitation for some time in timid and fearful silence, but there was something in my glance which communicated terror to her, and trembling, she asked, "What is it that agitates you, my dear Victor? What is it you fear?"

"Oh! Peace, peace, my love," replied I; "this night, and all will be safe; but this night is dreadful, very dreadful."

I passed an hour in this state of mind, when suddenly I reflected how fearful the combat which I momentarily expected would be to my wife, and I earnestly entreated her to retire, resolving not to join her until I had obtained some knowledge as to the situation of my enemy.

She left me, and I continued some time walking up and down the passages of the house and inspecting every corner that might afford a retreat to my adversary. But I discovered no trace of him and was beginning to conjecture that some fortunate chance had intervened to prevent the execution of his menaces when suddenly I heard a shrill and dreadful scream. It came from the room into which Elizabeth had retired. As I heard it, the whole truth rushed into my mind, my arms dropped, the motion of every muscle and fibre was suspended; I could feel the blood trickling in my veins and tingling in the extremities of my limbs. This state lasted but

for an instant; the scream was repeated, and I rushed into the room. Great God! Why did I not then expire! Why am I here to relate the destruction of the best hope and the purest creature on earth? She was there, lifeless and inanimate, thrown across the bed, her head hanging down and her pale and distorted features half covered by her hair. Everywhere I turn I see the same figure—her bloodless arms and relaxed form flung by the murderer on its bridal bier. Could I behold this and live? Alas! Life is obstinate and clings closest where it is most hated. For a moment only did I lose recollection; I fell senseless on the ground.

When I recovered I found myself surrounded by the people of the inn; their countenances expressed a breathless terror, but the horror of others appeared only as a mockery, a shadow of the feelings that oppressed me. I escaped from them to the room where lay the body of Elizabeth, my love, my wife, so lately living, so dear, so worthy. She had been moved from the posture in which I had first beheld her, and now, as she lay, her head upon her arm and a handkerchief thrown across her face and neck, I might have supposed her asleep. I rushed towards her and embraced her with ardour, but the deadly languor and coldness of the limbs told me that what I now held in my arms had ceased to be the Elizabeth whom I had loved and cherished. The murderous mark of the fiend's grasp was on her neck, and the breath had ceased to issue from her lips. While I still hung over her in the agony of despair, I happened to look up. The windows of the room had before been darkened, and I felt a kind of panic on seeing the pale yellow light of the moon illuminate the chamber. The shutters had been thrown back, and with a sensation of horror not to be described, I saw at the open window a figure the most hideous and abhorred. A grin was on the face of the monster; he seemed to jeer, as with his fiendish finger he pointed towards the corpse of my wife. I rushed towards the window, and drawing a pistol from my bosom, fired; but he eluded me, leaped from his station, and running with the swiftness of lightning, plunged into the lake.

The report of the pistol brought a crowd into the room. I pointed to the spot where he had disappeared, and we followed the track with boats; nets were cast, but in vain. After passing several hours, we returned hopeless, most of my companions believing it to have been a form conjured up by my fancy. After having landed, they proceeded to search the country, parties going in different directions among the woods and vines.

I attempted to accompany them and proceeded a short distance from the house, but my head whirled round, my steps were like those of a drunken man, I fell at last in a state of utter exhaustion; a film covered my eyes, and my skin was parched with the heat of fever. In this state I was carried back and placed on a bed, hardly conscious of what had happened; my eyes wandered round the room as if to seek something that I had lost.

After an interval I arose, and as if by instinct, crawled into the room where the corpse of my beloved lay. There were women weeping around; I hung over it and joined my sad tears to theirs; all this time no distinct idea presented itself to my mind, but my thoughts rambled to various subjects, reflecting confusedly on my misfortunes and their cause. I was bewildered, in a cloud of wonder and horror. The death of William, the execution of Justine, the murder of Clerval, and lastly of my wife; even at that moment I knew not that my only remaining friends were safe from the malignity of the fiend; my father even now might be writhing under his grasp, and Ernest might be dead at his feet. This idea made me shudder and recalled me to action. I started up and resolved to return to Geneva with all possible speed.

There were no horses to be procured, and I must return by the lake; but the wind was unfavourable, and the rain fell in torrents. However, it was hardly morning, and I might reasonably hope to arrive by night. I hired men to row and took an oar myself, for I had always experienced relief from mental torment in bodily exercise. But the overflowing misery I now felt, and the excess of agitation that I endured rendered me incapable of any exertion. I threw down the oar, and leaning my head upon my hands, gave way to every gloomy idea that arose. If I looked up, I saw scenes which were familiar to me in my happier time and which I had contemplated but the day before in the company of her who was now but a shadow and a recollection. Tears streamed from my eyes. The rain had ceased for a moment, and I saw the fish play in the waters as they had done a few hours before; they had then been observed by Elizabeth. Nothing is so painful to the human mind as a great and sudden change. The sun might shine or the clouds might lower, but nothing could appear to me as it had done the day before. A fiend had snatched from me every hope of future happiness; no creature had ever been so miserable as I was; so frightful an event is single in the history of man. But why should I dwell upon the incidents that followed this last overwhelming event? Mine has been a tale of horrors; I have reached their acme, and what I must now relate can but be tedious to

you. Know that, one by one, my friends were snatched away; I was left desolate. My own strength is exhausted, and I must tell, in a few words, what remains of my hideous narration. I arrived at Geneva. My father and Ernest yet lived, but the former sunk under the tidings that I bore. I see him now, excellent and venerable old man! His eyes wandered in vacancy, for they had lost their charm and their delight—his Elizabeth, his more than daughter, whom he doted on with all that affection which a man feels, who in the decline of life, having few affections, clings more earnestly to those that remain. Cursed, cursed be the fiend that brought misery on his grey hairs and doomed him to waste in wretchedness! He could not live under the horrors that were accumulated around him; the springs of existence suddenly gave way; he was unable to rise from his bed, and in a few days he died in my arms.

What then became of me? I know not; I lost sensation, and chains and darkness were the only objects that pressed upon me. Sometimes, indeed, I dreamt that I wandered in flowery meadows and pleasant vales with the friends of my youth, but I awoke and found myself in a dungeon. Melancholy followed, but by degrees I gained a clear conception of my miseries and situation and was then released from my prison. For they had called me mad, and during many months, as I understood, a solitary cell had been my habitation.

Liberty, however, had been a useless gift to me, had I not, as I awakened to reason, at the same time awakened to revenge. As the memory of past misfortunes pressed upon me, I began to reflect on their cause—the monster whom I had created, the miserable daemon whom I had sent abroad into the world for my destruction. I was possessed by a maddening rage when I thought of him, and desired and ardently prayed that I might have him within my grasp to wreak a great and signal revenge on his cursed head.

Nor did my hate long confine itself to useless wishes; I began to reflect on the best means of securing him; and for this purpose, about a month after my release, I repaired to a criminal judge in the town and told him that I had an accusation to make, that I knew the destroyer of my family, and that I required him to exert his whole authority for the apprehension of the murderer. The magistrate listened to me with attention and kindness.

“Be assured, sir,” said he, “no pains or exertions on my part shall be spared to discover the villain.”

“I thank you,” replied I; “listen, therefore, to the deposition that I have to make. It is indeed a tale so strange that I should fear you would not credit it were there not something in truth which, however wonderful, forces conviction. The story is too connected to be mistaken for a dream, and I have no motive for falsehood.” My manner as I thus addressed him was impressive but calm; I had formed in my own heart a resolution to pursue my destroyer to death, and this purpose quieted my agony and for an interval reconciled me to life. I now related my history briefly but with firmness and precision, marking the dates with accuracy and never deviating into invective or exclamation.

The magistrate appeared at first perfectly incredulous, but as I continued he became more attentive and interested; I saw him sometimes shudder with horror; at others a lively surprise, unmingled with disbelief, was painted on his countenance. When I had concluded my narration I said, “This is the being whom I accuse and for whose seizure and punishment I call upon you to exert your whole power. It is your duty as a magistrate, and I believe and hope that your feelings as a man will not revolt from the execution of those functions on this occasion.” This address caused a considerable change in the physiognomy of my own auditor. He had heard my story with that half kind of belief that is given to a tale of spirits and supernatural events; but when he was called upon to act officially in consequence, the whole tide of his incredulity returned. He, however, answered mildly, “I would willingly afford you every aid in your pursuit, but the creature of whom you speak appears to have powers which would put all my exertions to defiance. Who can follow an animal which can traverse the sea of ice and inhabit caves and dens where no man would venture to intrude? Besides, some months have elapsed since the commission of his crimes, and no one can conjecture to what place he has wandered or what region he may now inhabit.”

“I do not doubt that he hovers near the spot which I inhabit, and if he has indeed taken refuge in the Alps, he may be hunted like the chamois and destroyed as a beast of prey. But I perceive your thoughts; you do not credit my narrative and do not intend to pursue my enemy with the punishment which is his desert.” As I spoke, rage sparkled in my eyes; the magistrate was intimidated. “You are mistaken,” said he. “I will exert myself, and if it is in my power to seize the monster, be assured that he shall suffer punishment proportionate to his crimes. But I fear, from what you have yourself described to be his properties, that this will prove impracticable;

and thus, while every proper measure is pursued, you should make up your mind to disappointment."

"That cannot be; but all that I can say will be of little avail. My revenge is of no moment to you; yet, while I allow it to be a vice, I confess that it is the devouring and only passion of my soul. My rage is unspeakable when I reflect that the murderer, whom I have turned loose upon society, still exists. You refuse my just demand; I have but one resource, and I devote myself, either in my life or death, to his destruction."

I trembled with excess of agitation as I said this; there was a frenzy in my manner, and something, I doubt not, of that haughty fierceness which the martyrs of old are said to have possessed. But to a Genevan magistrate, whose mind was occupied by far other ideas than those of devotion and heroism, this elevation of mind had much the appearance of madness. He endeavoured to soothe me as a nurse does a child and reverted to my tale as the effects of delirium.

"Man," I cried, "how ignorant art thou in thy pride of wisdom! Cease; you know not what it is you say."

I broke from the house angry and disturbed and retired to meditate on some other mode of action.

Chapter 24

My present situation was one in which all voluntary thought was swallowed up and lost. I was hurried away by fury; revenge alone endowed me with strength and composure; it moulded my feelings and allowed me to be calculating and calm at periods when otherwise delirium or death would have been my portion.

My first resolution was to quit Geneva forever; my country, which, when I was happy and beloved, was dear to me, now, in my adversity, became hateful. I provided myself with a sum of money, together with a few jewels which had belonged to my mother, and departed. And now my wanderings began which are to cease but with life. I have traversed a vast portion of the earth and have endured all the hardships which travellers in deserts and barbarous countries are wont to meet. How I have lived I hardly know; many times have I stretched my failing limbs upon the sandy plain and prayed for death. But revenge kept me alive; I dared not die and leave my adversary in being.

When I quitted Geneva my first labour was to gain some clue by which I might trace the steps of my fiendish enemy. But my plan was unsettled, and I wandered many hours round the confines of the town, uncertain what path I should pursue. As night approached I found myself at the entrance of the cemetery where William, Elizabeth, and my father reposed. I entered it and approached the tomb which marked their graves. Everything was silent except the leaves of the trees, which were gently agitated by the wind; the night was nearly dark, and the scene would have been solemn and affecting even to an uninterested observer. The spirits of the departed seemed to flit around and to cast a shadow, which was felt but not seen, around the head of the mourner.

The deep grief which this scene had at first excited quickly gave way to rage and despair. They were dead, and I lived; their murderer also lived, and to destroy him I must drag out my weary existence. I knelt on the grass and kissed the earth and with quivering lips exclaimed, “By the sacred earth on which I kneel, by the shades that wander near me, by the deep and eternal grief that I feel, I swear; and by thee, O Night, and the spirits that preside over thee, to pursue the daemon who caused this misery, until he or I shall perish in mortal conflict. For this purpose I will preserve my life; to execute

this dear revenge will I again behold the sun and tread the green herbage of earth, which otherwise should vanish from my eyes forever. And I call on you, spirits of the dead, and on you, wandering ministers of vengeance, to aid and conduct me in my work. Let the cursed and hellish monster drink deep of agony; let him feel the despair that now torments me." I had begun my adjuration with solemnity and an awe which almost assured me that the shades of my murdered friends heard and approved my devotion, but the furies possessed me as I concluded, and rage choked my utterance.

I was answered through the stillness of night by a loud and fiendish laugh. It rang on my ears long and heavily; the mountains re-echoed it, and I felt as if all hell surrounded me with mockery and laughter. Surely in that moment I should have been possessed by frenzy and have destroyed my miserable existence but that my vow was heard and that I was reserved for vengeance. The laughter died away, when a well-known and abhorred voice, apparently close to my ear, addressed me in an audible whisper, "I am satisfied, miserable wretch! You have determined to live, and I am satisfied."

I darted towards the spot from which the sound proceeded, but the devil eluded my grasp. Suddenly the broad disk of the moon arose and shone full upon his ghastly and distorted shape as he fled with more than mortal speed.

I pursued him, and for many months this has been my task. Guided by a slight clue, I followed the windings of the Rhone, but vainly. The blue Mediterranean appeared, and by a strange chance, I saw the fiend enter by night and hide himself in a vessel bound for the Black Sea. I took my passage in the same ship, but he escaped, I know not how.

Amidst the wilds of Tartary and Russia, although he still evaded me, I have ever followed in his track. Sometimes the peasants, scared by this horrid apparition, informed me of his path; sometimes he himself, who feared that if I lost all trace of him I should despair and die, left some mark to guide me. The snows descended on my head, and I saw the print of his huge step on the white plain. To you first entering on life, to whom care is new and agony unknown, how can you understand what I have felt and still feel? Cold, want, and fatigue were the least pains which I was destined to endure; I was cursed by some devil and carried about with me my eternal hell; yet still a spirit of good followed and directed my steps and when I most murmured would suddenly extricate me from seemingly insurmountable difficulties. Sometimes, when nature, overcome by hunger,

sank under the exhaustion, a repast was prepared for me in the desert that restored and inspirited me. The fare was, indeed, coarse, such as the peasants of the country ate, but I will not doubt that it was set there by the spirits that I had invoked to aid me. Often, when all was dry, the heavens cloudless, and I was parched by thirst, a slight cloud would bedim the sky, shed the few drops that revived me, and vanish.

I followed, when I could, the courses of the rivers; but the daemon generally avoided these, as it was here that the population of the country chiefly collected. In other places human beings were seldom seen, and I generally subsisted on the wild animals that crossed my path. I had money with me and gained the friendship of the villagers by distributing it; or I brought with me some food that I had killed, which, after taking a small part, I always presented to those who had provided me with fire and utensils for cooking.

My life, as it passed thus, was indeed hateful to me, and it was during sleep alone that I could taste joy. O blessed sleep! Often, when most miserable, I sank to repose, and my dreams lulled me even to rapture. The spirits that guarded me had provided these moments, or rather hours, of happiness that I might retain strength to fulfil my pilgrimage. Deprived of this respite, I should have sunk under my hardships. During the day I was sustained and inspirited by the hope of night, for in sleep I saw my friends, my wife, and my beloved country; again I saw the benevolent countenance of my father, heard the silver tones of my Elizabeth's voice, and beheld Clerval enjoying health and youth. Often, when wearied by a toilsome march, I persuaded myself that I was dreaming until night should come and that I should then enjoy reality in the arms of my dearest friends. What agonizing fondness did I feel for them! How did I cling to their dear forms, as sometimes they haunted even my waking hours, and persuade myself that they still lived! At such moments vengeance, that burned within me, died in my heart, and I pursued my path towards the destruction of the daemon more as a task enjoined by heaven, as the mechanical impulse of some power of which I was unconscious, than as the ardent desire of my soul. What his feelings were whom I pursued I cannot know. Sometimes, indeed, he left marks in writing on the barks of the trees or cut in stone that guided me and instigated my fury. "My reign is not yet over"—these words were legible in one of these inscriptions—"you live, and my power is complete. Follow me; I seek the everlasting ices of the north, where you will feel the

misery of cold and frost, to which I am impassive. You will find near this place, if you follow not too tardily, a dead hare; eat and be refreshed. Come on, my enemy; we have yet to wrestle for our lives, but many hard and miserable hours must you endure until that period shall arrive."

Scoffing devil! Again do I vow vengeance; again do I devote thee, miserable fiend, to torture and death. Never will I give up my search until he or I perish; and then with what ecstasy shall I join my Elizabeth and my departed friends, who even now prepare for me the reward of my tedious toil and horrible pilgrimage!

As I still pursued my journey to the northward, the snows thickened and the cold increased in a degree almost too severe to support. The peasants were shut up in their hovels, and only a few of the most hardy ventured forth to seize the animals whom starvation had forced from their hiding-places to seek for prey. The rivers were covered with ice, and no fish could be procured; and thus I was cut off from my chief article of maintenance. The triumph of my enemy increased with the difficulty of my labours. One inscription that he left was in these words: "Prepare! Your toils only begin; wrap yourself in furs and provide food, for we shall soon enter upon a journey where your sufferings will satisfy my everlasting hatred."

My courage and perseverance were invigorated by these scoffing words; I resolved not to fail in my purpose, and calling on heaven to support me, I continued with unabated fervour to traverse immense deserts, until the ocean appeared at a distance and formed the utmost boundary of the horizon. Oh! How unlike it was to the blue seasons of the south! Covered with ice, it was only to be distinguished from land by its superior wildness and ruggedness. The Greeks wept for joy when they beheld the Mediterranean from the hills of Asia, and hailed with rapture the boundary of their toils. I did not weep, but I knelt down and with a full heart thanked my guiding spirit for conducting me in safety to the place where I hoped, notwithstanding my adversary's gibe, to meet and grapple with him.

Some weeks before this period I had procured a sledge and dogs and thus traversed the snows with inconceivable speed. I know not whether the fiend possessed the same advantages, but I found that, as before I had daily lost ground in the pursuit, I now gained on him, so much so that when I first saw the ocean he was but one day's journey in advance, and I hoped to intercept him before he should reach the beach. With new courage, therefore, I pressed on, and in two days arrived at a wretched hamlet on the seashore. I

inquired of the inhabitants concerning the fiend and gained accurate information. A gigantic monster, they said, had arrived the night before, armed with a gun and many pistols, putting to flight the inhabitants of a solitary cottage through fear of his terrific appearance. He had carried off their store of winter food, and placing it in a sledge, to draw which he had seized on a numerous drove of trained dogs, he had harnessed them, and the same night, to the joy of the horror-struck villagers, had pursued his journey across the sea in a direction that led to no land; and they conjectured that he must speedily be destroyed by the breaking of the ice or frozen by the eternal frosts.

On hearing this information I suffered a temporary access of despair. He had escaped me, and I must commence a destructive and almost endless journey across the mountainous ices of the ocean, amidst cold that few of the inhabitants could long endure and which I, the native of a genial and sunny climate, could not hope to survive. Yet at the idea that the fiend should live and be triumphant, my rage and vengeance returned, and like a mighty tide, overwhelmed every other feeling. After a slight repose, during which the spirits of the dead hovered round and instigated me to toil and revenge, I prepared for my journey. I exchanged my land-sledge for one fashioned for the inequalities of the frozen ocean, and purchasing a plentiful stock of provisions, I departed from land.

I cannot guess how many days have passed since then, but I have endured misery which nothing but the eternal sentiment of a just retribution burning within my heart could have enabled me to support. Immense and rugged mountains of ice often barred up my passage, and I often heard the thunder of the ground sea, which threatened my destruction. But again the frost came and made the paths of the sea secure.

By the quantity of provision which I had consumed, I should guess that I had passed three weeks in this journey; and the continual protraction of hope, returning back upon the heart, often wrung bitter drops of despondency and grief from my eyes. Despair had indeed almost secured her prey, and I should soon have sunk beneath this misery. Once, after the poor animals that conveyed me had with incredible toil gained the summit of a sloping ice mountain, and one, sinking under his fatigue, died, I viewed the expanse before me with anguish, when suddenly my eye caught a dark speck upon the dusky plain. I strained my sight to discover what it could be and uttered a wild cry of ecstasy when I distinguished a sledge and the

distorted proportions of a well-known form within. Oh! With what a burning gush did hope revisit my heart! Warm tears filled my eyes, which I hastily wiped away, that they might not intercept the view I had of the daemon; but still my sight was dimmed by the burning drops, until, giving way to the emotions that oppressed me, I wept aloud.

But this was not the time for delay; I disencumbered the dogs of their dead companion, gave them a plentiful portion of food, and after an hour's rest, which was absolutely necessary, and yet which was bitterly irksome to me, I continued my route. The sledge was still visible, nor did I again lose sight of it except at the moments when for a short time some ice-rock concealed it with its intervening crags. I indeed perceptibly gained on it, and when, after nearly two days' journey, I beheld my enemy at no more than a mile distant, my heart bounded within me.

But now, when I appeared almost within grasp of my foe, my hopes were suddenly extinguished, and I lost all trace of him more utterly than I had ever done before. A ground sea was heard; the thunder of its progress, as the waters rolled and swelled beneath me, became every moment more ominous and terrific. I pressed on, but in vain. The wind arose; the sea roared; and, as with the mighty shock of an earthquake, it split and cracked with a tremendous and overwhelming sound. The work was soon finished; in a few minutes a tumultuous sea rolled between me and my enemy, and I was left drifting on a scattered piece of ice that was continually lessening and thus preparing for me a hideous death. In this manner many appalling hours passed; several of my dogs died, and I myself was about to sink under the accumulation of distress when I saw your vessel riding at anchor and holding forth to me hopes of succour and life. I had no conception that vessels ever came so far north and was astounded at the sight. I quickly destroyed part of my sledge to construct oars, and by these means was enabled, with infinite fatigue, to move my ice raft in the direction of your ship. I had determined, if you were going southwards, still to trust myself to the mercy of the seas rather than abandon my purpose. I hoped to induce you to grant me a boat with which I could pursue my enemy. But your direction was northwards. You took me on board when my vigour was exhausted, and I should soon have sunk under my multiplied hardships into a death which I still dread, for my task is unfulfilled.

Oh! When will my guiding spirit, in conducting me to the daemon, allow me the rest I so much desire; or must I die, and he yet live? If I do, swear to

me, Walton, that he shall not escape, that you will seek him and satisfy my vengeance in his death. And do I dare to ask of you to undertake my pilgrimage, to endure the hardships that I have undergone? No; I am not so selfish. Yet, when I am dead, if he should appear, if the ministers of vengeance should conduct him to you, swear that he shall not live—swear that he shall not triumph over my accumulated woes and survive to add to the list of his dark crimes. He is eloquent and persuasive, and once his words had even power over my heart; but trust him not. His soul is as hellish as his form, full of treachery and fiend-like malice. Hear him not; call on the names of William, Justine, Clerval, Elizabeth, my father, and of the wretched Victor, and thrust your sword into his heart. I will hover near and direct the steel aright.

Walton, in continuation.
August 26th, 17—

You have read this strange and terrific story, Margaret; and do you not feel your blood congeal with horror, like that which even now curdles mine? Sometimes, seized with sudden agony, he could not continue his tale; at others, his voice broken, yet piercing, uttered with difficulty the words so replete with anguish. His fine and lovely eyes were now lighted up with indignation, now subdued to downcast sorrow and quenched in infinite wretchedness. Sometimes he commanded his countenance and tones and related the most horrible incidents with a tranquil voice, suppressing every mark of agitation; then, like a volcano bursting forth, his face would suddenly change to an expression of the wildest rage as he shrieked out imprecations on his persecutor.

His tale is connected and told with an appearance of the simplest truth, yet I own to you that the letters of Felix and Safie, which he showed me, and the apparition of the monster seen from our ship, brought to me a greater conviction of the truth of his narrative than his asseverations, however earnest and connected. Such a monster has, then, really existence! I cannot doubt it, yet I am lost in surprise and admiration. Sometimes I endeavoured to gain from Frankenstein the particulars of his creature's formation, but on this point he was impenetrable. "Are you mad, my friend?" said he. "Or whither does your senseless curiosity lead you? Would you also create for yourself and the world a demoniacal enemy? Peace,

peace! Learn my miseries and do not seek to increase your own." Frankenstein discovered that I made notes concerning his history; he asked to see them and then himself corrected and augmented them in many places, but principally in giving the life and spirit to the conversations he held with his enemy. "Since you have preserved my narration," said he, "I would not that a mutilated one should go down to posterity."

Thus has a week passed away, while I have listened to the strangest tale that ever imagination formed. My thoughts and every feeling of my soul have been drunk up by the interest for my guest which this tale and his own elevated and gentle manners have created. I wish to soothe him, yet can I counsel one so infinitely miserable, so destitute of every hope of consolation, to live? Oh, no! The only joy that he can now know will be when he composes his shattered spirit to peace and death. Yet he enjoys one comfort, the offspring of solitude and delirium; he believes that when in dreams he holds converse with his friends and derives from that communion consolation for his miseries or excitements to his vengeance, that they are not the creations of his fancy, but the beings themselves who visit him from the regions of a remote world. This faith gives a solemnity to his reveries that render them to me almost as imposing and interesting as truth.

Our conversations are not always confined to his own history and misfortunes. On every point of general literature he displays unbounded knowledge and a quick and piercing apprehension. His eloquence is forcible and touching; nor can I hear him, when he relates a pathetic incident or endeavours to move the passions of pity or love, without tears. What a glorious creature must he have been in the days of his prosperity, when he is thus noble and godlike in ruin! He seems to feel his own worth and the greatness of his fall.

"When younger," said he, "I believed myself destined for some great enterprise. My feelings are profound, but I possessed a coolness of judgment that fitted me for illustrious achievements. This sentiment of the worth of my nature supported me when others would have been oppressed, for I deemed it criminal to throw away in useless grief those talents that might be useful to my fellow creatures. When I reflected on the work I had completed, no less a one than the creation of a sensitive and rational animal, I could not rank myself with the herd of common projectors. But this thought, which supported me in the commencement of my career, now

serves only to plunge me lower in the dust. All my speculations and hopes are as nothing, and like the archangel who aspired to omnipotence, I am chained in an eternal hell. My imagination was vivid, yet my powers of analysis and application were intense; by the union of these qualities I conceived the idea and executed the creation of a man. Even now I cannot recollect without passion my reveries while the work was incomplete. I trod heaven in my thoughts, now exulting in my powers, now burning with the idea of their effects. From my infancy I was imbued with high hopes and a lofty ambition; but how am I sunk! Oh! My friend, if you had known me as I once was, you would not recognize me in this state of degradation. Despondency rarely visited my heart; a high destiny seemed to bear me on, until I fell, never, never again to rise." Must I then lose this admirable being? I have longed for a friend; I have sought one who would sympathize with and love me. Behold, on these desert seas I have found such a one, but I fear I have gained him only to know his value and lose him. I would reconcile him to life, but he repulses the idea.

"I thank you, Walton," he said, "for your kind intentions towards so miserable a wretch; but when you speak of new ties and fresh affections, think you that any can replace those who are gone? Can any man be to me as Clerval was, or any woman another Elizabeth? Even where the affections are not strongly moved by any superior excellence, the companions of our childhood always possess a certain power over our minds which hardly any later friend can obtain. They know our infantine dispositions, which, however they may be afterwards modified, are never eradicated; and they can judge of our actions with more certain conclusions as to the integrity of our motives. A sister or a brother can never, unless indeed such symptoms have been shown early, suspect the other of fraud or false dealing, when another friend, however strongly he may be attached, may, in spite of himself, be contemplated with suspicion. But I enjoyed friends, dear not only through habit and association, but from their own merits; and wherever I am, the soothing voice of my Elizabeth and the conversation of Clerval will be ever whispered in my ear. They are dead, and but one feeling in such a solitude can persuade me to preserve my life. If I were engaged in any high undertaking or design, fraught with extensive utility to my fellow creatures, then could I live to fulfil it. But such is not my destiny; I must pursue and destroy the being to whom I gave existence; then my lot on earth will be fulfilled and I may die."

September 2nd

My beloved Sister,

I write to you, encompassed by peril and ignorant whether I am ever doomed to see again dear England and the dearer friends that inhabit it. I am surrounded by mountains of ice which admit of no escape and threaten every moment to crush my vessel. The brave fellows whom I have persuaded to be my companions look towards me for aid, but I have none to bestow. There is something terribly appalling in our situation, yet my courage and hopes do not desert me. Yet it is terrible to reflect that the lives of all these men are endangered through me. If we are lost, my mad schemes are the cause.

And what, Margaret, will be the state of your mind? You will not hear of my destruction, and you will anxiously await my return. Years will pass, and you will have visitings of despair and yet be tortured by hope. Oh! My beloved sister, the sickening failing of your heart-felt expectations is, in prospect, more terrible to me than my own death.

But you have a husband and lovely children; you may be happy. Heaven bless you and make you so!

My unfortunate guest regards me with the tenderest compassion. He endeavours to fill me with hope and talks as if life were a possession which he valued. He reminds me how often the same accidents have happened to other navigators who have attempted this sea, and in spite of myself, he fills me with cheerful auguries. Even the sailors feel the power of his eloquence; when he speaks, they no longer despair; he rouses their energies, and while they hear his voice they believe these vast mountains of ice are mole-hills which will vanish before the resolutions of man. These feelings are transitory; each day of expectation delayed fills them with fear, and I almost dread a mutiny caused by this despair.

September 5th

A scene has just passed of such uncommon interest that, although it is highly probable that these papers may never reach you, yet I cannot forbear recording it.

We are still surrounded by mountains of ice, still in imminent danger of being crushed in their conflict. The cold is excessive, and many of my unfortunate comrades have already found a grave amidst this scene of desolation. Frankenstein has daily declined in health; a feverish fire still glimmers in his eyes, but he is exhausted, and when suddenly roused to any exertion, he speedily sinks again into apparent lifelessness.

I mentioned in my last letter the fears I entertained of a mutiny. This morning, as I sat watching the wan countenance of my friend—his eyes half closed and his limbs hanging listlessly—I was roused by half a dozen of the sailors, who demanded admission into the cabin. They entered, and their leader addressed me. He told me that he and his companions had been chosen by the other sailors to come in deputation to me to make me a requisition which, in justice, I could not refuse. We were immured in ice and should probably never escape, but they feared that if, as was possible, the ice should dissipate and a free passage be opened, I should be rash enough to continue my voyage and lead them into fresh dangers, after they might happily have surmounted this. They insisted, therefore, that I should engage with a solemn promise that if the vessel should be freed I would instantly direct my course southwards.

This speech troubled me. I had not despaired, nor had I yet conceived the idea of returning if set free. Yet could I, in justice, or even in possibility, refuse this demand? I hesitated before I answered, when Frankenstein, who had at first been silent, and indeed appeared hardly to have force enough to attend, now roused himself; his eyes sparkled, and his cheeks flushed with momentary vigour. Turning towards the men, he said, “What do you mean? What do you demand of your captain? Are you, then, so easily turned from your design? Did you not call this a glorious expedition?

“And wherefore was it glorious? Not because the way was smooth and placid as a southern sea, but because it was full of dangers and terror, because at every new incident your fortitude was to be called forth and your courage exhibited, because danger and death surrounded it, and these you were to brave and overcome. For this was it a glorious, for this was it an honourable undertaking. You were hereafter to be hailed as the benefactors of your species, your names adored as belonging to brave men who encountered death for honour and the benefit of mankind. And now, behold, with the first imagination of danger, or, if you will, the first mighty and terrific trial of your courage, you shrink away and are content to be handed

down as men who had not strength enough to endure cold and peril; and so, poor souls, they were chilly and returned to their warm firesides. Why, that requires not this preparation; ye need not have come thus far and dragged your captain to the shame of a defeat merely to prove yourselves cowards. Oh! Be men, or be more than men. Be steady to your purposes and firm as a rock. This ice is not made of such stuff as your hearts may be; it is mutable and cannot withstand you if you say that it shall not. Do not return to your families with the stigma of disgrace marked on your brows. Return as heroes who have fought and conquered and who know not what it is to turn their backs on the foe." He spoke this with a voice so modulated to the different feelings expressed in his speech, with an eye so full of lofty design and heroism, that can you wonder that these men were moved? They looked at one another and were unable to reply. I spoke; I told them to retire and consider of what had been said, that I would not lead them farther north if they strenuously desired the contrary, but that I hoped that, with reflection, their courage would return. They retired and I turned towards my friend, but he was sunk in languor and almost deprived of life.

How all this will terminate, I know not, but I had rather die than return shamefully, my purpose unfulfilled. Yet I fear such will be my fate; the men, unsupported by ideas of glory and honour, can never willingly continue to endure their present hardships.

September 7th

The die is cast; I have consented to return if we are not destroyed. Thus are my hopes blasted by cowardice and indecision; I come back ignorant and disappointed. It requires more philosophy than I possess to bear this injustice with patience.

September 12th

It is past; I am returning to England. I have lost my hopes of utility and glory; I have lost my friend. But I will endeavour to detail these bitter circumstances to you, my dear sister; and while I am wafted towards England and towards you, I will not despond.

September 9th, the ice began to move, and roarings like thunder were heard at a distance as the islands split and cracked in every direction. We

were in the most imminent peril, but as we could only remain passive, my chief attention was occupied by my unfortunate guest whose illness increased in such a degree that he was entirely confined to his bed. The ice cracked behind us and was driven with force towards the north; a breeze sprang from the west, and on the 11th the passage towards the south became perfectly free. When the sailors saw this and that their return to their native country was apparently assured, a shout of tumultuous joy broke from them, loud and long-continued. Frankenstein, who was dozing, awoke and asked the cause of the tumult. "They shout," I said, "because they will soon return to England."

"Do you, then, really return?"

"Alas! Yes; I cannot withstand their demands. I cannot lead them unwillingly to danger, and I must return."

"Do so, if you will; but I will not. You may give up your purpose, but mine is assigned to me by heaven, and I dare not. I am weak, but surely the spirits who assist my vengeance will endow me with sufficient strength." Saying this, he endeavoured to spring from the bed, but the exertion was too great for him; he fell back and fainted.

It was long before he was restored, and I often thought that life was entirely extinct. At length he opened his eyes; he breathed with difficulty and was unable to speak. The surgeon gave him a composing draught and ordered us to leave him undisturbed. In the meantime he told me that my friend had certainly not many hours to live.

His sentence was pronounced, and I could only grieve and be patient. I sat by his bed, watching him; his eyes were closed, and I thought he slept; but presently he called to me in a feeble voice, and bidding me come near, said, "Alas! The strength I relied on is gone; I feel that I shall soon die, and he, my enemy and persecutor, may still be in being. Think not, Walton, that in the last moments of my existence I feel that burning hatred and ardent desire of revenge I once expressed; but I feel myself justified in desiring the death of my adversary. During these last days I have been occupied in examining my past conduct; nor do I find it blamable. In a fit of enthusiastic madness I created a rational creature and was bound towards him to assure, as far as was in my power, his happiness and well-being.

"This was my duty, but there was another still paramount to that. My duties towards the beings of my own species had greater claims to my attention because they included a greater proportion of happiness or misery.

Urged by this view, I refused, and I did right in refusing, to create a companion for the first creature. He showed unparalleled malignity and selfishness in evil; he destroyed my friends; he devoted to destruction beings who possessed exquisite sensations, happiness, and wisdom; nor do I know where this thirst for vengeance may end. Miserable himself that he may render no other wretched, he ought to die. The task of his destruction was mine, but I have failed. When actuated by selfish and vicious motives, I asked you to undertake my unfinished work, and I renew this request now, when I am only induced by reason and virtue.

"Yet I cannot ask you to renounce your country and friends to fulfil this task; and now that you are returning to England, you will have little chance of meeting with him. But the consideration of these points, and the well balancing of what you may esteem your duties, I leave to you; my judgment and ideas are already disturbed by the near approach of death. I dare not ask you to do what I think right, for I may still be misled by passion.

"That he should live to be an instrument of mischief disturbs me; in other respects, this hour, when I momentarily expect my release, is the only happy one which I have enjoyed for several years. The forms of the beloved dead flit before me, and I hasten to their arms. Farewell, Walton! Seek happiness in tranquillity and avoid ambition, even if it be only the apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries. Yet why do I say this? I have myself been blasted in these hopes, yet another may succeed."

His voice became fainter as he spoke, and at length, exhausted by his effort, he sank into silence. About half an hour afterwards he attempted again to speak but was unable; he pressed my hand feebly, and his eyes closed forever, while the irradiation of a gentle smile passed away from his lips.

Margaret, what comment can I make on the untimely extinction of this glorious spirit? What can I say that will enable you to understand the depth of my sorrow? All that I should express would be inadequate and feeble. My tears flow; my mind is overshadowed by a cloud of disappointment. But I journey towards England, and I may there find consolation.

I am interrupted. What do these sounds portend? It is midnight; the breeze blows fairly, and the watch on deck scarcely stir. Again there is a sound as of a human voice, but hoarser; it comes from the cabin where the

remains of Frankenstein still lie. I must arise and examine. Good night, my sister.

Great God! what a scene has just taken place! I am yet dizzy with the remembrance of it. I hardly know whether I shall have the power to detail it; yet the tale which I have recorded would be incomplete without this final and wonderful catastrophe. I entered the cabin where lay the remains of my ill-fated and admirable friend. Over him hung a form which I cannot find words to describe—gigantic in stature, yet uncouth and distorted in its proportions. As he hung over the coffin, his face was concealed by long locks of ragged hair; but one vast hand was extended, in colour and apparent texture like that of a mummy. When he heard the sound of my approach, he ceased to utter exclamations of grief and horror and sprung towards the window. Never did I behold a vision so horrible as his face, of such loathsome yet appalling hideousness. I shut my eyes involuntarily and endeavoured to recollect what were my duties with regard to this destroyer. I called on him to stay.

He paused, looking on me with wonder, and again turning towards the lifeless form of his creator, he seemed to forget my presence, and every feature and gesture seemed instigated by the wildest rage of some uncontrollable passion.

“That is also my victim!” he exclaimed. “In his murder my crimes are consummated; the miserable series of my being is wound to its close! Oh, Frankenstein! Generous and self-devoted being! What does it avail that I now ask thee to pardon me? I, who irretrievably destroyed thee by destroying all thou lovedst. Alas! He is cold, he cannot answer me.” His voice seemed suffocated, and my first impulses, which had suggested to me the duty of obeying the dying request of my friend in destroying his enemy, were now suspended by a mixture of curiosity and compassion. I approached this tremendous being; I dared not again raise my eyes to his face, there was something so scaring and unearthly in his ugliness. I attempted to speak, but the words died away on my lips. The monster continued to utter wild and incoherent self-reproaches. At length I gathered resolution to address him in a pause of the tempest of his passion.

“Your repentance,” I said, “is now superfluous. If you had listened to the voice of conscience and heeded the stings of remorse before you had urged your diabolical vengeance to this extremity, Frankenstein would yet have lived.”

“And do you dream?” said the daemon. “Do you think that I was then dead to agony and remorse? He,” he continued, pointing to the corpse, “he suffered not in the consummation of the deed. Oh! Not the ten-thousandth portion of the anguish that was mine during the lingering detail of its execution. A frightful selfishness hurried me on, while my heart was poisoned with remorse. Think you that the groans of Clerval were music to my ears? My heart was fashioned to be susceptible of love and sympathy, and when wrenched by misery to vice and hatred, it did not endure the violence of the change without torture such as you cannot even imagine.

“After the murder of Clerval I returned to Switzerland, heart-broken and overcome. I pitied Frankenstein; my pity amounted to horror; I abhorred myself. But when I discovered that he, the author at once of my existence and of its unspeakable torments, dared to hope for happiness, that while he accumulated wretchedness and despair upon me he sought his own enjoyment in feelings and passions from the indulgence of which I was forever barred, then impotent envy and bitter indignation filled me with an insatiable thirst for vengeance. I recollected my threat and resolved that it should be accomplished. I knew that I was preparing for myself a deadly torture, but I was the slave, not the master, of an impulse which I detested yet could not disobey. Yet when she died! Nay, then I was not miserable. I had cast off all feeling, subdued all anguish, to riot in the excess of my despair. Evil thenceforth became my good. Urged thus far, I had no choice but to adapt my nature to an element which I had willingly chosen. The completion of my demoniacal design became an insatiable passion. And now it is ended; there is my last victim!”

I was at first touched by the expressions of his misery; yet, when I called to mind what Frankenstein had said of his powers of eloquence and persuasion, and when I again cast my eyes on the lifeless form of my friend, indignation was rekindled within me. “Wretch!” I said. “It is well that you come here to whine over the desolation that you have made. You throw a torch into a pile of buildings, and when they are consumed, you sit among the ruins and lament the fall. Hypocritical fiend! If he whom you mourn still lived, still would he be the object, again would he become the prey, of your accursed vengeance. It is not pity that you feel; you lament only because the victim of your malignity is withdrawn from your power.”

“Oh, it is not thus—not thus,” interrupted the being. “Yet such must be the impression conveyed to you by what appears to be the purport of my

actions. Yet I seek not a fellow feeling in my misery. No sympathy may I ever find. When I first sought it, it was the love of virtue, the feelings of happiness and affection with which my whole being overflowed, that I wished to be participated. But now that virtue has become to me a shadow, and that happiness and affection are turned into bitter and loathing despair, in what should I seek for sympathy? I am content to suffer alone while my sufferings shall endure; when I die, I am well satisfied that abhorrence and opprobrium should load my memory. Once my fancy was soothed with dreams of virtue, of fame, and of enjoyment. Once I falsely hoped to meet with beings who, pardoning my outward form, would love me for the excellent qualities which I was capable of unfolding. I was nourished with high thoughts of honour and devotion. But now crime has degraded me beneath the meanest animal. No guilt, no mischief, no malignity, no misery, can be found comparable to mine. When I run over the frightful catalogue of my sins, I cannot believe that I am the same creature whose thoughts were once filled with sublime and transcendent visions of the beauty and the majesty of goodness. But it is even so; the fallen angel becomes a malignant devil. Yet even that enemy of God and man had friends and associates in his desolation; I am alone.

"You, who call Frankenstein your friend, seem to have a knowledge of my crimes and his misfortunes. But in the detail which he gave you of them he could not sum up the hours and months of misery which I endured wasting in impotent passions. For while I destroyed his hopes, I did not satisfy my own desires. They were forever ardent and craving; still I desired love and fellowship, and I was still spurned. Was there no injustice in this? Am I to be thought the only criminal, when all humankind sinned against me? Why do you not hate Felix, who drove his friend from his door with contumely? Why do you not execrate the rustic who sought to destroy the saviour of his child? Nay, these are virtuous and immaculate beings! I, the miserable and the abandoned, am an abortion, to be spurned at, and kicked, and trampled on. Even now my blood boils at the recollection of this injustice.

"But it is true that I am a wretch. I have murdered the lovely and the helpless; I have strangled the innocent as they slept and grasped to death his throat who never injured me or any other living thing. I have devoted my creator, the select specimen of all that is worthy of love and admiration among men, to misery; I have pursued him even to that irremediable ruin.

“There he lies, white and cold in death. You hate me, but your abhorrence cannot equal that with which I regard myself. I look on the hands which executed the deed; I think on the heart in which the imagination of it was conceived and long for the moment when these hands will meet my eyes, when that imagination will haunt my thoughts no more.

“Fear not that I shall be the instrument of future mischief. My work is nearly complete. Neither yours nor any man’s death is needed to consummate the series of my being and accomplish that which must be done, but it requires my own. Do not think that I shall be slow to perform this sacrifice. I shall quit your vessel on the ice raft which brought me thither and shall seek the most northern extremity of the globe; I shall collect my funeral pile and consume to ashes this miserable frame, that its remains may afford no light to any curious and unhallowed wretch who would create such another as I have been. I shall die. I shall no longer feel the agonies which now consume me or be the prey of feelings unsatisfied, yet unquenched. He is dead who called me into being; and when I shall be no more, the very remembrance of us both will speedily vanish. I shall no longer see the sun or stars or feel the winds play on my cheeks.

“Light, feeling, and sense will pass away; and in this condition must I find my happiness. Some years ago, when the images which this world affords first opened upon me, when I felt the cheering warmth of summer and heard the rustling of the leaves and the warbling of the birds, and these were all to me, I should have wept to die; now it is my only consolation. Polluted by crimes and torn by the bitterest remorse, where can I find rest but in death?

“Farewell! I leave you, and in you the last of humankind whom these eyes will ever behold. Farewell, Frankenstein! If thou wert yet alive and yet cherished a desire of revenge against me, it would be better satiated in my life than in my destruction. But it was not so; thou didst seek my extinction, that I might not cause greater wretchedness; and if yet, in some mode unknown to me, thou hadst not ceased to think and feel, thou wouldst not desire against me a vengeance greater than that which I feel. Blasted as thou wert, my agony was still superior to thine, for the bitter sting of remorse will not cease to rankle in my wounds until death shall close them forever.

“But soon,” he cried with sad and solemn enthusiasm, “I shall die, and what I now feel be no longer felt. Soon these burning miseries will be extinct. I shall ascend my funeral pile triumphantly and exult in the agony

of the torturing flames. The light of that conflagration will fade away; my ashes will be swept into the sea by the winds. My spirit will sleep in peace, or if it thinks, it will not surely think thus. Farewell."

He sprang from the cabin window as he said this, upon the ice raft which lay close to the vessel. He was soon borne away by the waves and lost in darkness and distance.

THE END

The Non-Fiction

Shelley's Cottage in West Street, Marlow, where the poet's wife Mary finished writing 'Frankenstein' and Shelley wrote the epic poem 'Laon and Cyntheia', while also arranging relief for the poor people of Marlow.

LIST OF ESSAYS

THE NECESSITY OF ATHEISM
ON A FUTURE STATE
ON LOVE
ON LIFE
ON A FUTURE STATE
ON THE PUNISHMENT OF DEATH
SPECULATIONS ON METAPHYSICS
SPECULATIONS ON MORALS
ESSAY ON THE LITERATURE, THE ARTS, AND THE MANNERS OF THE ATHENIANS
A PHILOSOPHICAL VIEW OF REFORM
ON THE SYMPOSIUM, OR PREFACE TO THE BANQUET OF PLATO
A DEFENCE OF POETRY
A VINDICATION OF NATURAL DIET

THE NECESSITY OF ATHEISM

[NOTE — The Necessity of Atheism was published by Shelley in 1811. In 1813 he printed a revised and expanded version of it as one of the notes to his poem Queen Mab. The revised and expanded version is the one here reprinted.]

There Is No God

This negation must be understood solely to affect a creative Deity. The hypothesis of a pervading Spirit co-eternal with the universe remains unshaken.

A close examination of the validity of the proofs adduced to support any proposition is the only secure way of attaining truth, on the advantages of which it is unnecessary to descant: our knowledge of the existence, of a Deity is a subject of such importance that it cannot be too minutely investigated; in consequence of this conviction we proceed briefly and impartially to examine the proofs which have been adduced. It is necessary first to consider the nature of belief.

When a proposition is offered to the mind, It perceives the agreement or disagreement of the ideas of which it is composed. A perception of their agreement is termed belief. Many obstacles frequently prevent this perception from being immediate; these the mind attempts to remove in order that the perception may be distinct. The mind is active in the investigation in order to perfect the state of perception of the relation which the component ideas of the proposition bear to each, which is passive; the investigation being confused with the perception has induced many falsely to imagine that the mind is active in belief. — that belief is an act of volition, — in consequence of which it may be regulated by the mind. Pursuing, continuing this mistake, they have attached a degree of criminality to disbelief; of which, in its nature, it is incapable: it is equally incapable of merit.

Belief, then, is a passion, the strength of which, like every other passion, is in precise proportion to the degrees of excitement.

The degrees of excitement are three.

The senses are the sources of all knowledge to the mind; consequently their evidence claims the strongest assent.

The decision of the mind, founded upon our own experience, derived from these sources, claims the next degree.

The experience of others, which addresses itself to the former one, occupies the lowest degree.

(A graduated scale, on which should be marked the capabilities of propositions to approach to the test of the senses, would be a just barometer of the belief which ought to be attached to them.)

Consequently no testimony can be admitted which is contrary to reason; reason is founded on the evidence of our senses.

Every proof may be referred to one of these three divisions: it is to be considered what arguments we receive from each of them, which should convince us of the existence of a Deity.

1st, The evidence of the senses. If the Deity should appear to us, if he should convince our senses of his existence, this revelation would necessarily command belief. Those to whom the Deity has thus appeared have the strongest possible conviction of his existence. But the God of Theologians is incapable of local visibility.

2d, Reason. It is urged that man knows that whatever is must either have had a beginning, or have existed from all eternity, he also knows that whatever is not eternal must have had a cause. When this reasoning is applied to the universe, it is necessary to prove that it was created: until that is clearly demonstrated we may reasonably suppose that it has endured from all eternity. We must prove design before we can infer a designer. The only idea which we can form of causation is derivable from the constant conjunction of objects, and the consequent inference of one from the other. In a base where two propositions are diametrically opposite, the mind believes that which is least incomprehensible; — it is easier to suppose that the universe has existed from all eternity than to conceive a being beyond its limits capable of creating it: if the mind sinks beneath the weight of one, is it an alleviation to increase the intolerability of the burthen?

The other argument, which is founded on a Man’s knowledge of his own existence, stands thus. A man knows not only that he now is, but that once he was not; consequently there must have been a cause. But our idea of causation is alone derivable from the constant conjunction of objects and the consequent Inference of one from the other; and, reasoning

experimentally, we can only infer from effects caused adequate to those effects. But there certainly is a generative power which is effected by certain instruments: we cannot prove that it is inherent in these instruments" nor is the contrary hypothesis capable of demonstration: we admit that the generative power is incomprehensible; but to suppose that the same effect is produced by an eternal, omniscient, omnipotent being leaves the cause in the same obscurity, but renders it more incomprehensible.

3d, Testimony. It is required that testimony should not be contrary to reason. The testimony that the Deity convinces the senses of men of his existence can only be admitted by us, if our mind considers it less probable, that these men should have been deceived than that the Deity should have appeared to them. Our reason can never admit the testimony of men, who not only declare that they were eye-witnesses of miracles, but that the Deity was irrational; for he commanded that he should be believed, he proposed the highest rewards for, faith, eternal punishments for disbelief. We can only command voluntary actions; belief is not an act of volition; the mind is ever passive, or involuntarily active; from this it is evident that we have no sufficient testimony, or rather that testimony is insufficient to prove the being of a God. It has been before shown that it cannot be deduced from reason. They alone, then, who have been convinced by the evidence of the senses can believe it.

Hence it is evident that, having no proofs from either of the three sources of conviction, the mind cannot believe the existence of a creative God: it is also evident that, as belief is a passion of the mind, no degree of criminality is attachable to disbelief; and that they only are reprehensible who neglect to remove the false medium through which their mind views any subject of discussion. Every reflecting mind must acknowledge that there is no proof of the existence of a Deity.

God is an hypothesis, and, as such, stands in need of proof: the onus probandi rests on the theist. Sir Isaac Newton says: Hypotheses non fingo, quicquid enim ex phaenomenis non deducitur hypothesis, vocanda est, et hypothesis vel metaphysicae, vel physicae, vel qualitatum occultarum, seu mechanicae, in philosophia locum non habent. To all proofs of the existence of a creative God apply this valuable rule. We see a variety of bodies possessing a variety of powers: we merely know their effects; we are in a estate of ignorance with respect to their essences and causes. These Newton calls the phenomena of things; but the pride of philosophy is unwilling to

admit its ignorance of their causes. From the phenomena, which are the objects of our attempt to infer a cause, which we call God, and gratuitously endow it with all negative and contradictory qualities. From this hypothesis we invent this general name, to conceal our ignorance of causes and essences. The being called God by no means answers with the conditions prescribed by Newton; it bears every mark of a veil woven by philosophical conceit, to hide the ignorance of philosophers even from themselves. They borrow the threads of its texture from the anthropomorphism of the vulgar. Words have been used by sophists for the same purposes, from the occult qualities of the peripatetics to the effuvium of Boyle and the crinities or nebulae of Herschel. God is represented as infinite, eternal, incomprehensible; he is contained under every predicate in non that the logic of ignorance could fabricate. Even his worshippers allow that it is impossible to form any idea of him: they exclaim with the French poet,

Pour dire ce qu'il est, il faut etre lui-meme.

Lord Bacon says that atheism leaves to man reason, philosophy, natural piety, laws, reputation, and everything that can serve to conduct him to virtue; but superstition destroys all these, and erects itself into a tyranny over the understandings of men: hence atheism never disturbs the government, but renders man more clear- sighted, since he sees nothing beyond the boundaries of the present life. — Bacon's Moral Essays.

The [Beginning here, and to the paragraph ending with Systeme de la Nature," Shelley wrote in French. A free translation has been substituted.] first theology of man made him first fear and adore the elements themselves, the gross and material objects of nature; he next paid homage to the agents controlling the elements, lower genies, heroes or men gifted with great qualities. By force of reflection he sought to simplify things by submitting all nature to a single agent, spirit, or universal soul, which, gave movement to nature and all its branches. Mounting from cause to cause, mortal man has ended by seeing nothing; and it is in this obscurity that he has placed his God; it is in this darksome abyss that his uneasy imagination has always labored to fabricate chimeras, which will continue to afflict him until his knowledge of nature chases these phantoms which he has always so adored.

If we wish to explain our ideas of the Divinity we shall be obliged to admit that, by the word God, man has never been able to designate but the most hidden, the most distant and the most unknown cause of the effects

which he saw; he has made use of his word only when the play of natural and known causes ceased to be visible to him; as soon as he lost the thread of these causes, or when his mind could no longer follow the chain, he cut the difficulty and ended his researches by calling God the last of the causes, that is to say, that which is beyond all causes that he knew; thus he but assigned a vague denomination to an unknown cause, at which his laziness or the limits of his knowledge forced him to stop. Every time we say that God is the author of some phenomenon, that signifies that we are ignorant of how such a phenomenon was able to operate by the aid of forces or causes that we know in nature. It is thus that the generality of mankind, whose lot is ignorance, attributes to the Divinity, not only the unusual effects which strike them, but moreover the most simple events, of which the causes are the most simple to understand by whomever is able to study them. In a word, man has always respected unknown causes, surprising effects that his ignorance kept him from unraveling. It was on this debris of nature that man raised the imaginary colossus of the Divinity.

If ignorance of nature gave birth to gods, knowledge of nature is made for their destruction. In proportion as man taught himself, his strength and his resources augmented with his knowledge; science, the arts, industry, furnished him assistance; experience reassured him or procured for him means of resistance to the efforts of many causes which ceased to alarm as soon as they became understood. In a word, his terrors dissipated in the same proportion as his mind became enlightened. The educated man ceases to be superstitious.

It is only by hearsay (by word of mouth passed down from generation to generation) that whole peoples adore the God of their fathers and of their priests: authority, confidence, submission and custom with them take the place of conviction or of proofs: they prostrate themselves and pray, because their fathers taught them to prostrate themselves and pray: but why did their fathers fall on their knees? That is because, in primitive times, their legislators and their guides made it their duty. “Adore and believe,” they said, “the gods whom you cannot understand; have confidence in our profound wisdom; we know more than you about Divinity.” But why should I come to you? It is because God willed it thus; it is because God will punish you if you dare resist. But this God, is not he, then, the thing in question? However, man has always traveled in this vicious circle; his slothful mind has always made him find it easier to accept the judgment of

others. All religious nations are founded solely on authority; all the religions of the world forbid examination and do not want one to reason; authority wants one to believe in God; this God is himself founded only on the authority of a few men who pretend to know him, and to come in his name and announce him on earth. A God made by man undoubtedly has need of man to make himself known to man.

Should it not, then, be for the priests, the inspired, the metaphysicians that should be reserved the conviction of the existence of a God, which they, nevertheless, say is so necessary for all mankind? But Can you find any harmony in the theological opinions of the different inspired ones or thinkers scattered over the earth? They themselves, who make a profession of adoring the same God, are they in Agreement? Are they content with the proofs that their colleagues bring of his existence? Do they subscribe unanimously to the ideas they present on nature, on his conduct, on the manner of understanding his pretended oracles? Is there a country on earth where the science of God is really perfect? Has this science anywhere taken the consistency and uniformity that we the see the science of man assume, even in the most futile crafts, the most despised trades. These words mind immateriality, creation, predestination and grace; this mass of subtle distinctions with which theology to everywhere filled; these so ingenious inventions, imagined by thinkers who have succeeded one another for so many centuries, have only, alas! confused things all the more, and never has man's most necessary science, up to this time acquired the slightest fixity. For thousands of years the lazy dreamers have perpetually relieved one another to meditate on the Divinity, to divine his secret will, to invent the proper hypothesis to develop this important enigma. Their slight success has not discouraged the theological vanity: one always speaks of God: one has his throat cut for God: and this sublime being still remains the most unknown and the most discussed.

Man would have been too happy, if, limiting himself to the visible objects which interested him, he had employed, to perfect his real sciences, his laws, his morals, his education, one-half the efforts he has put into his researches on the Divinity. He would have been still wiser and still more fortunate if he had been satisfied to let his jobless guides quarrel among themselves, sounding depths capable of rendering them dizzy, without himself mixing in their senseless disputes. But it is the essence of ignorance to attach importance to that which it does not understand. Human vanity is

so constituted that it stiffens before difficulties. The more an object conceals itself from our eyes, the greater the effort we make to seize it, because it pricks our pride, it excites our curiosity and it appears interesting. In fighting for his God everyone, in fact, fights only for the interests of his own vanity, which, of all the passions produced by the mal-organization of society, is the quickest to take offense, and the most capable of committing the greatest follies.

If, leaving for a moment the annoying idea that theology gives of a capricious God, whose partial and despotic decrees decide the fate of mankind, we wish to fix our eyes only on the pretended goodness, which all men, even trembling before this God, agree is ascribing to him, if we allow him the purpose that is lent him of having worked only for his own glory, of exacting the homage of intelligent beings; of seeking only in his works the well-being of mankind; how reconcile these views and these dispositions with the ignorance truly invincible in which this God, so glorious and so good, leaves the majority of mankind in regard to God himself? If God wishes to be known, cherished, thanked, why does he not show himself under his favorable features to all these intelligent beings by whom he wishes to be loved and adored? Why not manifest himself to the whole earth in an unequivocal manner, much more capable of convincing us than these private revelations which seem to accuse the Divinity of an annoying partiality for some of his creatures? The all-powerful, should he not heave more convincing means by which to show man than these ridiculous metamorphoses, these pretended incarnations, which are attested by writers so little in agreement among themselves? In place of so many miracles, invented to prove the divine mission of so many legislators revered by the different people of the world, the Sovereign of these spirits, could he not convince the human mind in an instant of the things he wished to make known to it? Instead of hanging the sun in the vault of the firmament, instead of scattering stars without order, and the constellations which fill space, would it not have been more in conformity with the views of a God so jealous of his glory and so well-intentioned for mankind, to write, in a manner not subject to dispute, his name, his attributes, his permanent wishes in ineffaceable characters, equally understandable to all the inhabitants of the earth? No one would then be able to doubt the existence of God, of his clear will, of his visible intentions. Under the eyes of this so terrible God no one would have the audacity to violate his commands, no

mortal would dare risk attracting his anger: finally, no man would have the effrontery to impose on his name or to interpret his will according to his own fancy.

In fact, even while admitting the existence of the theological God, and the reality of his so discordant attributes which they impute to him, one can conclude nothing to authorize the conduct or the cult which one is prescribed to render him. Theology is truly the sieve of the Danaides. By dint of contradictory qualities and hazarded assertions it has, that is to say, so handicapped its God that it has made it impossible for him to act. If he is infinitely good, what reason should we have to fear him? If he is infinitely wise, why should we have doubts concerning our future? If he knows all, why warn him of our needs and fatigue him with our prayers? If he is everywhere, why erect temples to him? If he is just, why fear that he will punish the creatures that he has, filled with weaknesses? If grace does everything for them, what reason would he have for recompensing them? If he is all-powerful, how offend him, how resist him? If he is reasonable, how can he be angry at the blind, to whom he has given the liberty of being unreasonable? If he is immovable, by what right do we pretend to make him change his decrees? If he is inconceivable, why occupy ourselves with him? IF HE HAS SPOKEN, WHY IS THE UNIVERSE NOT CONVINCED? If the knowledge of a God is the most necessary, why is it not the most evident and the clearest. — Systame de la Nature. London, 1781.

The enlightened and benevolent Pliny thus Publicly professes himself an atheist, — Quapropter effigiem Del formamque quaerere imbecillitatis humanae reor. Quisquis est Deus (si modo est alius) et quacunque in parte, totus est gensus, totus est visus, totus auditus, totus animae, totus animi, totus sul. ... Imperfectae vero in homine naturae praecipua solatia, ne deum quidem omnia. Namque nec sibi protest mortem consciscere, si velit, quod homini dedit optimum in tantis vitae poenis; nee mortales aeternitate donare, aut revocare defunctos; nec facere ut qui vixit non vixerit, qui honores gessit non gesserit, nullumque habere In praeteritum ius praeterquam oblivionts, atque (ut. facetis quoque argumentis societas haec cum, deo compuletur) ut bis dena viginti non sint, et multa similiter efficere non posse. — Per quaedeclaratur haud dubie naturae potentiam id quoque ease quod Deum vocamus. — Plin. Nat. Hist. cap. de Deo.

The consistent Newtonian is necessarily an atheist. See Sir W. Drummond’s Academical Questions, chap. iii. — Sir W. seems to consider

the atheism to which it leads as a sufficient presumption of the falsehood of the system of gravitation; but surely it is more consistent with the good faith of philosophy to admit a deduction from facts than an hypothesis incapable of proof, although it might militate, with the obstinate preconceptions of the mob. Had this author, instead of inveighing against the guilt and absurdity of atheism, demonstrated its falsehood, his conduct would have, been more suited to the modesty of the skeptic and the toleration of the philosopher.

Omnia enim per Dei potentiam facta aunt: imo quia naturae potentia nulla est nisi ipsa Dei potentia. Certum est nos eatenus Dei potentiam non intelligere, quatenus causas naturales ignoramus; adeoque stulte ad eandem Dei potentism recurritur, quando rei alicuius causam naturalem, sive est, ipsam Dei potentiam ignoramusd — Spinoza, Tract. Theologico-Pol. chap 1. P. 14.

ON A FUTURE STATE

It has been the persuasion of an immense majority of human beings in all ages and nations that we continue to live after death — that apparent termination of all the functions of sensitive and intellectual existence. Nor has mankind been contented with supposing that species of existence which some philosophers have asserted; namely, the resolution of the component parts of the mechanism of a living being into its elements, and the impossibility of the minutest particle of these sustaining the smallest diminution. They have clung to the idea that sensibility and thought, which they have distinguished from the objects of it, under the several names of spirit and matter, is, in its own nature, less susceptible of division and decay, and that, when the body is resolved into its elements, the principle which animated it will remain perpetual and unchanged. Some philosophers — and those to whom we are indebted for the most stupendous discoveries in physical science — suppose, on the other hand, that intelligence is the mere result of certain combinations among the particles of its objects; and those among them who believe that we live after death, recur to the interposition of a supernatural power, which shall overcome the tendency inherent in all material combinations, to dissipate and be absorbed into other forms.

Let us trace the reasoning which in one and the other have conducted to these two opinions, and endeavor to discover what we ought to think on a question of such momentous interest. Let us analyze the ideas and feelings which constitute the contending beliefs, and watchfully establish a discrimination between words and thoughts. Let us bring the question to the test of experience and fact; and ask ourselves, considering our nature in its entire extent, what light we derive from a sustained and comprehensive view of its component parts, which may enable us to assert, with certainty,, that we do or do not live after death.

The examination of this subject requires that it should be stripped of all those accessory topics which adhere to it in the common opinion of men. The existence of a God, and a future state of rewards and punishments are totally foreign to the subject. If it be proved that the world is ruled by a Divine Power, no inference necessarily can be drawn from that circumstance in favor of a future state. It has been asserted, indeed, that as

goodness and justice are to be numbered among the attributes of the Deity, he will undoubtedly compensate the virtuous who suffer during life, and that he will make every sensitive being, who does not deserve punishment, happy forever. But this view of the subject, which it would be tedious as well as superfluous to develop and expose, satisfies no person, and cuts the knot which we now seek to untie. Moreover, should it be proved, on the other hand, that the mysterious principle which regulates the proceedings of the universe, to neither intelligent nor sensitive, yet it is not an inconsistency to suppose at the same time, that the animating power survives the body which it has animated, by laws as independent of any supernatural agent as those through which it first became united with it. Nor, if a future state be clearly proved, does it follow that it will be a state of punishment or reward.

By the word death, we express that condition in which natures resembling ourselves apparently cease to be that which they are. We no longer hear them speak, nor see them move. If they have sensations and apprehensions, we no longer participate in them. We know no more than that those external organs, and all that fine texture of material frame, without which we have no experience that life or thought can subsist, are dissolved and scattered abroad. The body is placed under the earth, and after a certain period there remains no vestige even of its form. This is that contemplation of inexhaustible melancholy, whose shadow eclipses the brightness of the world. The common observer is struck with dejection of the spectacle. He contends in vain against the persuasion of the grave, that the dead indeed cease to be. The corpse at his feet is prophetic of his own destiny. Those who have preceded him, and whose voice was delightful to his ear; whose touch met his like sweet and subtle fire: whose aspect spread a visionary light upon his path — these he cannot meet again. The organs of sense are destroyed, and the intellectual operations dependent on them have perished with their sources. How can a corpse see or feel? its eyes are eaten out, and its heart is black and without motion. What intercourse can two heaps of putrid Clay and crumbling bones hold together? When you can discover where the fresh colors of the faded flower abide, or the music of the broken lyre seek life among the dead. Such are the anxious and fearful contemplations of the common observer, though the popular religion often prevents him from confessing them even to himself.

The natural philosopher, in addition to the sensations common to all men inspired by the event of death, believes that he sees with more certainty that it is attended with the annihilation of sentiment and thought. He observes the mental powers increase and fade with those of the body, and even accommodate themselves to the most transitory changes of our physical nature. Sleep suspends many of the faculties of the vital and intellectual principle; drunkenness and disease will either temporarily or permanently derange them. Madness or idiocy may utterly extinguish the most excellent and delicate of those powers. In old age the mind gradually withers; and as it grew and was strengthened with the body, so does it together with the body sink into decrepitude. Assuredly these are convincing evidences that so soon as the organs of the body are subjected to the laws of inanimate matter, sensation, and perception, and apprehension, are at an end. It is probable that what we call thought is not an actual being, but no more than the relation between certain parts of that infinitely varied mass, of which the rest of the universe is composed, and which ceases to exist so soon as those parts change their position with regard to each other. Thus color, and sound, and taste, and odor exist only relatively. But let thought be considered only as some peculiar substance, which permeates, and is the cause of, the animation of living beings. Why should that substance be assumed to be something essentially distinct from all others, and exempt from subjection to those laws from which no other substance is exempt? It differs, indeed, from all other substances, as electricity, and light, and magnetism, and the constituent parts of air and earth, severally differ from all others. Each of these is subject to change and decay, and to conversion into other forms. Yet the difference between light and earth is scarcely greater than that which exists between life, or thought, and fire. The difference between the two former was never alleged as an argument for eternal permanence of either, in that form under which they first might offer themselves to our notice. Why should the difference between the two latter substances be an argument for the prolongation of the existence of one and not the other, when the existence of both has arrived at their apparent termination? To say that fire exists without manifesting any of the properties of fire, such as light, heat, etc., or that the Principle of life exists without consciousness, or memory, or desire, or motive, is to resign, by an awkward distortion of language, the affirmative of the dispute. To say that the principle of life may exist in distribution among various forms, is to assert what cannot be

proved to be either true or false, but which, were it true, annihilates all hope of existence after death, in any sense in which that event can belong to the hopes and fears of men. Suppose, however, that the intellectual and vital principle differs in the most marked and essential manner from all other known substances; that they have all some resemblance between themselves which it in no degree participates. In what manner can this concession be made an argument for its imperishabillity? All that we see or know perishes and is changed. Life and thought differ indeed from everything else. But that it survives that period, beyond which we have no experience of its existence, such distinction and dissimilarity affords no shadow of proof, and nothing but our own desires could have led us to conjecture or imagine.

Have we existed before birth? It is difficult to conceive the possibility of this. There is, in the generative principle of each animal and plant, a power which converts the substances homogeneous with itself. That is, the relations between certain elementary particles of matter undergo a change, and submit to new combinations. For when we use words: principle, power, cause, etc., we mean to express no real being, but only to class under those terms a certain series of coexisting phenomena; but let it be supposed that this principle is a certain substance which escapes the observation of the chemist and anatomist. It certainly may be; thought it is sufficiently unphilosophical to allege the possibility of an opinion as a proof of its truth. Does it see, hear, feel, before its combination with those organs on which sensation depends? Does it reason, imagine, apprehend, without those ideas which sensation alone can communicate? If we have not existed before birth; If, at the period when the parts of our nature on which thought and life depend, seem to be woven together; If there are no reasons to suppose that we have existed before that period at which our existence apparently commences, then there are no grounds for supposing that we shall continue to exist after our existence has apparently ceased. So far as thought and life is concerned, the same will take place with regard to us, individually considered, after death, as had taken place before our birth.

It is said that it is possible that we should continue to exist in some mode totally inconceivable to us at present. This is a most unreasonable presumption. It casts on the adherents of annihilation the burden of proving the negative of a question, the affirmative of which is not supported by a single argument, and which, by its very nature, lies beyond the experience of the human understanding. It is sufficiently easy. indeed, to form any

proposition, concerning which we are ignorant, just not so absurd as not to be contradictory in itself, and defy refutation. The possibility of whatever enters into the wildest imagination to conceive is thus triumphantly vindicated. But it is enough that such assertions should be either contradictory to the known laws of nature, or exceed the limits of our experience, that their fallacy or irrelevancy to our consideration should be demonstrated. They persuade, indeed, only those who desire to be persuaded.

This desire to be forever as we are; the reluctance to a violent and unexperienced change, which is common to all the animated and inanimate combinations of the universe, is, indeed, the secret persuasion which has given birth to the opinions of a future state.

ON LOVE

What is love? Ask him who lives, what is life? ask him who adores, what is God?

I know not the internal constitution of other men, nor even thine, whom I now address. I see that in some external attributes they resemble me, but when, misled by that appearance, I have thought to appeal to something in common, and unburthen my inmost soul to them, I have found my language misunderstood, like one in a distant and savage land. The more opportunities they have afforded me for experience, the wider has appeared the interval between us, and to a greater distance have the points of sympathy been withdrawn. With a spirit ill fitted to sustain such proof, trembling and feeble through its tenderness, I have everywhere sought sympathy and have found only repulse and disappointment.

Thou demandest what is love? It is that powerful attraction towards all that we conceive, or fear, or hope beyond ourselves, when we find within our own thoughts the chasm of an insufficient void, and seek to awaken in all things that are, a community with what we experience within ourselves. If we reason, we would be understood; if we imagine, we would that the airy children of our brain were born anew within another's; if we feel, we would that another's nerves should vibrate to our own, that the beams of their eyes should kindle at once and mix and melt into our own, that lips of motionless ice should not reply to lips quivering and burning with the heart's best blood. This is Love. This is the bond and the sanction which connects not only man with man, but with everything which exists. We are born into the world, and there is something within us which, from the instant that we live, more and more thirsts after its likeness. It is probably in correspondence with this law that the infant drains milk from the bosom of its mother; this propensity develops itself with the development of our nature. We dimly see within our intellectual nature a miniature as it were of our entire self, yet deprived of all that we condemn or despise, the ideal prototype of everything excellent or lovely that we are capable of conceiving as belonging to the nature of man. Not only the portrait of our external being, but an assemblage of the minutest particles of which our nature is composed;[Footnote: These words are ineffectual and metaphorical. Most words are so — No help!] a mirror whose surface

reflects only the forms of purity and brightness; a soul within our soul that describes a circle around its proper paradise, which pain, and sorrow, and evil dare not overleap. To this we eagerly refer all sensations, thirsting that they should resemble or correspond with it. The discovery of its antitype; the meeting with an understanding capable of clearly estimating our own; an imagination which should enter into and seize upon the subtle and delicate peculiarities which we have delighted to cherish and unfold in secret; with a frame whose nerves, like the chords of two exquisite lyres, strung to the accompaniment of one delightful voice, vibrate with the vibrations of our own; and of a combination of all these in such proportion as the type within demands; this is the invisible and unattainable point to which Love tends; and to attain which, it urges forth the powers of man to arrest the faintest shadow of that, without the possession of which there is no rest nor respite to the heart over which it rules. Hence in solitude, or in that deserted state when we are surrounded by human beings, and yet they sympathize not with us, we love the flowers, the grass, and the waters, and the sky. In the motion of the very leaves of spring, in the blue air, there is then found a secret correspondence with our heart. There is eloquence in the tongueless wind, and a melody in the flowing brooks and the rustling of the reeds beside them, which by their inconceivable relation to something within the soul, awaken the spirits to a dance of breathless rapture, and bring tears of mysterious tenderness to the eyes, like the enthusiasm of patriotic success, or the voice of one beloved singing to you alone. Sterne says that, if he were in a desert, he would love some cypress. So soon as this want or power is dead, man becomes the living sepulchre of himself, and what yet survives is the mere husk of what once he was.

[1815; publ. 1840]

ON LIFE

Life and the world, or whatever we call that which we are and feel, is an astonishing thing. The mist of familiarity obscures from us the wonder of our being. We are struck with admiration at some of its transient modifications, but it is itself the great miracle. What are changes of empires, the wreck of dynasties, with the opinions which supported them; what is the birth and the extinction of religious and of political systems to life? What are the revolutions of the globe which we inhabit, and the operations of the elements of which it is composed, compared with life? What is the universe of stars, and suns, of which this inhabited earth is one, and their motions, and their destiny, compared with life? Life, the great miracle, we admire not, because it is so miraculous. It is well that we are thus shielded by the familiarity of what is at once so certain and so unfathomable, from an astonishment which would otherwise absorb and overawe the functions of that which is its object.

If any artist, I do not say had executed, but had merely conceived in his mind the system of the sun, and the stars, and planets, they not existing, and had painted to us in words, or upon canvas, the spectacle now afforded by the nightly cope of heaven, and illustrated it by the wisdom of astronomy, great would be our admiration. Or had he imagined the scenery of this earth, the mountains, the seas, and the rivers; the grass, and the flowers, and the variety of the forms and masses of the leaves of the woods, and the colours which attend the setting and the rising sun, and the hues of the atmosphere, turbid or serene, these things not before existing, truly we should have been astonished, and it would not have been a vain boast to have said of such a man, ‘Non merita nome di creatore, se non Iddio ed il Poeta.’ But now these things are looked on with little wonder, and to be conscious of them with intense delight is esteemed to be the distinguishing mark of a refined and extraordinary person. The multitude of men care not for them. It is thus with Life — that which includes all.

What is life? Thoughts and feelings arise, with or without our will, and we employ words to express them. We are born, and our birth is unremembered, and our infancy remembered but in fragments; we live on, and in living we lose the apprehension of life. How vain is it to think that words can penetrate the mystery of our being! Rightly used they may make

evident our ignorance to ourselves, and this is much. For what are we? Whence do we come? and whither do we go? Is birth the commencement, is death the conclusion of our being? What is birth and death?

The most refined abstractions of logic conduct to a view of life, which, though startling to the apprehension, is, in fact, that which the habitual sense of its repeated combinations has extinguished in us. It strips, as it were, the painted curtain from this scene of things. I confess that I am one of those who are unable to refuse my assent to the conclusions of those philosophers who assert that nothing exists but as it is perceived.

It is a decision against which all our persuasions struggle, and we must be long convicted before we can be convinced that the solid universe of external things is 'such stuff as dreams are made of.' The shocking absurdities of the popular philosophy of mind and matter, its fatal consequences in morals, and their violent dogmatism concerning the source of all things, had early conducted me to materialism. This materialism is a seducing system to young and superficial minds. It allows its disciples to talk, and dispenses them from thinking. But I was discontented with such a view of things as it afforded; man is a being of high aspirations, 'looking both before and after,' whose 'thoughts wander through eternity,' disclaiming alliance with transience and decay; incapable of imagining to himself annihilation; existing but in the future and the past; being, not what he is, but what he has been and shall be. Whatever may be his true and final destination, there is a spirit within him at enmity with nothingness and dissolution. This is the character of all life and being. Each is at once the centre and the circumference; the point to which all things are referred, and the line in which all things are contained. Such contemplations as these, materialism and the popular philosophy of mind and matter alike forbid; they are only consistent with the intellectual system.

It is absurd to enter into a long recapitulation of arguments sufficiently familiar to those inquiring minds, whom alone a writer on abstruse subjects can be conceived to address. Perhaps the most clear and vigorous statement of the intellectual system is to be found in Sir William Drummond's Academical Questions.

After such an exposition, it would be idle to translate into other words what could only lose its energy and fitness by the change. Examined point by point, and word by word, the most discriminating intellects have been

able to discern no train of thoughts in the process of reasoning, which does not conduct inevitably to the conclusion which has been stated.

What follows from the admission? It establishes no new truth, it gives us no additional insight into our hidden nature, neither its action nor itself. Philosophy, impatient as it may be to build, has much work yet remaining, as pioneer for the overgrowth of ages. It makes one step towards this object; it destroys error, and the roots of error. It leaves, what it is too often the duty of the reformer in political and ethical questions to leave, a vacancy. It reduces the mind to that freedom in which it would have acted, but for the misuse of words and signs, the instruments of its own creation. By signs, I would be understood in a wide sense, including what is properly meant by that term, and what I peculiarly mean. In this latter sense, almost all familiar objects are signs, standing, not for themselves, but for others, in their capacity of suggesting one thought which shall lead to a train of thoughts. Our whole life is thus an education of error.

Let us recollect our sensations as children. What a distinct and intense apprehension had we of the world and of ourselves! Many of the circumstances of social life were then important to us which are now no longer so. But that is not the point of comparison on which I mean to insist. We less habitually distinguished all that we saw and felt, from ourselves. They seemed as it were to constitute one mass. There are some persons who, in this respect, are always children. Those who are subject to the state called reverie, feel as if their nature were dissolved into the surrounding universe, or as if the surrounding universe were absorbed into their being. They are conscious of no distinction. And these are states which precede, or accompany, or follow an unusually intense and vivid apprehension of life. As men grow up this power commonly decays, and they become mechanical and habitual agents. Thus feelings and then reasonings are the combined result of a multitude of entangled thoughts, and of a series of what are called impressions, planted by reiteration.

The view of life presented by the most refined deductions of the intellectual philosophy, is that of unity. Nothing exists but as it is perceived. The difference is merely nominal between those two classes of thought, which are vulgarly distinguished by the names of ideas and of external objects. Pursuing the same thread of reasoning, the existence of distinct individual minds, similar to that which is employed in now questioning its own nature, is likewise found to be a delusion. The words *I*, YOU, THEY,

are not signs of any actual difference subsisting between the assemblage of thoughts thus indicated, but are merely marks employed to denote the different modifications of the one mind.

Let it not be supposed that this doctrine conducts to the monstrous presumption that I, the person who now write and think, am that one mind. I am but a portion of it. The words *I*, and YOU, and THEY, are grammatical devices invented simply for arrangement, and totally devoid of the intense and exclusive sense usually attached to them. It is difficult to find terms adequate to express so subtle a conception as that to which the Intellectual Philosophy has conducted us. We are on that verge where words abandon us, and what wonder if we grow dizzy to look down the dark abyss of how little we know. The relations of THINGS remain unchanged, by whatever system. By the word THINGS is to be understood any object of thought, that is any thought upon which any other thought is employed, with an apprehension of distinction.

The relations of these remain unchanged; and such is the material of our knowledge. What is the cause of life? that is, how was it produced, or what agencies distinct from life have acted or act upon life? All recorded generations of mankind have weariedly busied themselves in inventing answers to this question; and the result has been, — Religion. Yet, that the basis of all things cannot be, as the popular philosophy alleges, mind, is sufficiently evident. Mind, as far as we have any experience of its properties, and beyond that experience how vain is argument! cannot create, it can only perceive. It is said also to be the cause. But cause is only a word expressing a certain state of the human mind with regard to the manner in which two thoughts are apprehended to be related to each other. If any one desires to know how unsatisfactorily the popular philosophy employs itself upon this great question, they need only impartially reflect upon the manner in which thoughts develop themselves in their minds. It is infinitely improbable that the cause of mind, that is, of existence, is similar to mind.

[1815; publ. 1840]

ON A FUTURE STATE

It has been the persuasion of an immense majority of human beings in all ages and nations that we continue to live after death, — that apparent termination of all the functions of sensitive and intellectual existence. Nor has mankind been contented with supposing that species of existence which some philosophers have asserted; namely, the resolution of the component parts of the mechanism of a living being into its elements, and the impossibility of the minutest particle of these sustaining the smallest diminution. They have clung to the idea that sensibility and thought, which they have distinguished from the objects of it, under the several names of spirit and matter, is, in its own nature, less susceptible of division and decay, and that, when the body is resolved into its elements, the principle which animated it will remain perpetual and unchanged. Some philosophers-and those to whom we are indebted for the most stupendous discoveries in physical science, suppose, on the other hand, that intelligence is the mere result of certain combinations among the particles of its objects; and those among them who believe that we live after death, recur to the interposition of a supernatural power, which shall overcome the tendency inherent in all material combinations, to dissipate and be absorbed into other forms.

Let us trace the reasonings which in one and the other have conducted to these two opinions, and endeavour to discover what we ought to think on a question of such momentous interest. Let us analyse the ideas and feelings which constitute the contending beliefs, and watchfully establish a discrimination between words and thoughts. Let us bring the question to the test of experience and fact; and ask ourselves, considering our nature in its entire extent, what light we derive from a sustained and comprehensive view of its component parts, which may enable, us to assert, with certainty, that we do or do not live after death.

The examination of this subject requires that it should be stript of all those accessory topics which adhere to it in the common opinion of men. The existence of a God, and a future state of rewards and punishments, are totally foreign to the subject. If it be proved that the world is ruled by a Divine Power, no inference necessarily can be drawn from that circumstance in favour of a future state. It has been asserted, indeed, that as

goodness and justice are to be numbered among the attributes of the Deity, He will undoubtedly compensate the virtuous who suffer during life, and that He will make every sensitive being who does not deserve punishment, happy for ever. But this view of the subject, which it would be tedious as well as superfluous to develop and expose, satisfies no person, and cuts the knot which we now seek to untie. Moreover, should it be proved, on the other hand, that the mysterious principle which regulates the proceedings of the universe, is neither intelligent nor sensitive, yet it is not an inconsistency to suppose at the same time, that the animating power survives the body which it has animated, by laws as independent of any supernatural agent as those through which it first became united with it. Nor, if a future state be clearly proved, does it follow that it will be a state of punishment or reward.

By the word death, we express that condition in which natures resembling ourselves apparently cease to be that which they were. We no longer hear them speak, nor see them move. If they have sensations and apprehensions, we no longer participate in them. We know no more than that those external organs, and all that fine texture of material frame, without which we have no experience that life or thought can subsist, are dissolved and scattered abroad. The body is placed under the earth, and after a certain period there remains no vestige even of its form. This is that contemplation of inexhaustible melancholy, whose shadow eclipses the brightness of the world. The common observer is struck with dejection at the spectacle. He contends in vain against the persuasion of the grave, that the dead indeed cease to be. The corpse at his feet is prophetic of his own destiny. Those who have preceded him, and whose voice was delightful to his ear; whose touch met his like sweet and subtle fire; whose aspect spread a visionary light upon his path — these he cannot meet again. The organs of sense are destroyed, and the intellectual operations dependent on them have perished with their sources. How can a corpse see or feel? its eyes are eaten out, and its heart is black and without motion. What intercourse can two heaps of putrid clay and crumbling bones hold together? When you can discover where the fresh colours of the faded flower abide, or the music of the broken lyre, seek life among the dead. Such are the anxious and fearful contemplations of the common observer, though the popular religion often prevents him from confessing them even to himself.

The natural philosopher, in addition to the sensations common to all men inspired by the event of death, believes that he sees with more certainty that

it is attended with the annihilation of sentiment and thought. He observes the mental powers increase and fade with those of the body, and even accommodate themselves to the most transitory changes of our physical nature. Sleep suspends many of the faculties of the vital and intellectual principle; drunkenness and disease will either temporarily or permanently derange them. Madness or idiotcy may utterly extinguish the most excellent and delicate of those powers. In old age the mind gradually withers; and as it grew and was strengthened with the body, so does it together with the body sink into decrepitude. Assuredly these are convincing evidences that so soon as the organs of the body are subjected to the laws of inanimate matter, sensation, and perception, and apprehension, are at an end. It is probable that what we call thought is not an actual being, but no more than the relation between certain parts of that infinitely varied mass, of which the rest of the universe is composed, and which ceases to exist so soon as those parts change their position with regard to each other. Thus colour, and sound, and taste, and odour exist only relatively. But let thought be considered as some peculiar substance, which permeates, and is the cause of, the animation of living beings. Why should that substance be assumed to be something essentially distinct from all others, and exempt from subjection to those laws from which no other substance is exempt? It differs, indeed, from all other substances, as electricity, and light, and magnetism, and the constituent parts of air and earth, severally differ from all others. Each of these is subject to change and to decay, and to conversion into other forms. Yet the difference between light and earth is scarcely greater than that which exists between life, or thought, and fire. The difference between the two former was never alleged as an argument for the eternal permanence of either, in that form under which they first might offer themselves to our notice. Why should the difference between the two latter substances be an argument for the prolongation of the existence of one and not the other, when the existence of both has arrived at their apparent termination? To say that fire exists without manifesting any of the properties of fire, such as light, heat, etc., or that the principle of life exists without consciousness, or memory, or desire, or motive, is to resign, by an awkward distortion of language, the affirmative of the dispute. To say that the principle of life MAY exist in distribution among various forms, is to assert what cannot be proved to be either true or false, but which, were it true, annihilates all hope of existence after death, in any sense in which that

event can belong to the hopes and fears of men. Suppose, however, that the intellectual and vital principle differs in the most marked and essential manner from all other known substances; that they have all some resemblance between themselves which it in no degree participates. In what manner can this concession be made an argument for its imperishability? All that we see or know perishes and is changed. Life and thought differ indeed from everything else. But that it survives that period, beyond which we have no experience of its existence, such distinction and dissimilarity affords no shadow of proof, and nothing but our own desires could have led us to conjecture or imagine. Have we existed before birth? It is difficult to conceive the possibility of this. There is, in the generative principle of each animal and plant, a power which converts the substances by which it is surrounded into a substance homogeneous with itself. That is, the relations between certain elementary particles of matter undergo a change, and submit to new combinations. For when we use the words PRINCIPLE, POWER, CAUSE, we mean to express no real being, but only to class under those terms a certain series of co-existing phenomena; but let it be supposed that this principle is a certain substance which escapes the observation of the chemist and anatomist. It certainly MAY BE; though it is sufficiently unphilosophical to allege the possibility of an opinion as a proof of its truth. Does it see, hear, feel, before its combination with those organs on which sensation depends? Does it reason, imagine, apprehend, without those ideas which sensation alone can communicate? If we have not existed before birth; if, at the period when the parts of our nature on which thought and life depend, seem to be woven together; if there are no reasons to suppose that we have existed before that period at which our existence apparently commences, then there are no grounds for supposition that we shall continue to exist after our existence has apparently ceased. So far as thought is concerned, the same will take place with regard to use, individually considered, after death, as had place before our birth.

It is said that it, is possible that we should continue to exist in some mode totally inconceivable to us at present. This is a most unreasonable presumption. It casts on the adherents of annihilation the burthen of proving the negative of a question, the affirmative of which is not supported by a single argument, and which, by its very nature, lies beyond the experience of the human understanding. It is sufficiently easy, indeed, to form any proposition, concerning which we are ignorant, just not so absurd as not to

be contradictory in itself, and defy refutation. The possibility of whatever enters into the wildest imagination to conceive is thus triumphantly vindicated. But it is enough that such assertions should be either contradictory to the known laws of nature, or exceed the limits of our experience, that their fallacy or irrelevancy to our consideration should be demonstrated. They persuade, indeed, only those who desire to be persuaded. This desire to be for ever as we are; the reluctance to a violent and unexperienced change, which is common to all the animated and inanimate combinations of the universe, is, indeed, the secret persuasion which has given birth to the opinions of a future state.

[1815; publ. 1840]

ON THE PUNISHMENT OF DEATH

A FRAGMENT

The first law which it becomes a Reformer to propose and support, at the approach of a period of great political change, is the abolition of the punishment of death.

It is sufficiently clear that revenge, retaliation, atonement, expiation, are rules and motives, so far from deserving a place in any enlightened system of political life, that they are the chief sources of a prodigious class of miseries in the domestic circles of society. It is clear that however the spirit of legislation may appear to frame institutions upon more philosophical maxims, it has hitherto, in those cases which are termed criminal, done little more than palliate the spirit, by gratifying a portion of it; and afforded a compromise between that which is bests — the inflicting of no evil upon a sensitive being, without a decisively beneficial result in which he should at least participates — and that which is worst; that he should be put to torture for the amusement of those whom he may have injured, or may seem to have injured.

Omitting these remoter considerations, let us inquire what, DEATH is; that punishment which is applied as a measure of transgressions of indefinite shades of distinction, so soon as they shall have passed that degree and colour of enormity, with which it is supposed no, inferior infliction is commensurate.

And first, whether death is good or evil, a punishment or a reward, or whether it be wholly indifferent, no man can take upon himself to assert. That that within us which thinks and feels, continues to think and feel after the dissolution of the body, has been the almost universal opinion of mankind, and the accurate philosophy of what I may be permitted to term the modern Academy, by showing the prodigious depth and extent of our ignorance respecting the causes and nature of sensation, renders probable the affirmative of a proposition, the negative of which it is so difficult to conceive, and the popular arguments against which, derived from what is called the atomic system, are proved to be applicable only to the relation which one object bears to another, as apprehended by the mind, and not to

existence itself, or the nature of that essence which is the medium and receptacle of objects.

The popular system of religion suggests the idea that the mind, after death, will be painfully or pleasurably affected according to its determinations during life. However ridiculous and pernicious we must admit the vulgar accessories of this creed to be, there is a certain analogy, not wholly absurd, between the consequences resulting to an individual during life from the virtuous or vicious, prudent or imprudent, conduct of his external actions, to those consequences which are conjectured to ensue from the discipline and order of his internal thoughts, as affecting his condition in a future state. They omit, indeed, to calculate upon the accidents of disease, and temperament, and organization, and circumstance, together with the multitude of independent agencies which affect the opinions, the conduct, and the happiness of individuals, and produce determinations of the will, and modify the judgement, so as to produce effects the most opposite in natures considerably similar. These are those operations in the order of the whole of nature, tending, we are prone to believe, to some definite mighty end, to which the agencies of our peculiar nature are subordinate; nor is there any reason to suppose, that in a future state they should become suddenly exempt from that subordination. The philosopher is unable to determine whether our existence in a previous state has affected our present condition, and abstains from deciding whether our present condition will affect us in that which may be future. That, if we continue to exist, the manner of our existence will be such as no inferences nor conjectures, afforded by a consideration of our earthly experience, can elucidate, is sufficiently obvious. The opinion that the vital principle within us, in whatever mode it may continue to exist, must lose that consciousness of definite and individual being which now characterizes it, and become a unit in the vast sum of action and of thought which disposes and animates the universe, and is called God, seems to belong to that class of opinion which has been designated as indifferent.

To compel a person to know all that can be known by the dead concerning that which the living fear, hope, or forget; to plunge him into the pleasure or pain which there awaits him; to punish or reward him in a manner and in a degree incalculable and incomprehensible by us; to disrobe him at once from all that intertexture of good and evil with which Nature

seems to have clothed every form of individual existence, is to inflict on him the doom of death.

A certain degree of pain and terror usually accompany the infliction of death. This degree is infinitely varied by the infinite variety in the temperament and opinions of the sufferers. As a measure of punishment, strictly so considered, and as an exhibition, which, by its known effects on the sensibility of the sufferer, is intended to intimidate the spectators from incurring a similar liability, it is singularly inadequate.

Firstly, Persons of energetic character, in whom, as in men who suffer for political crimes, there is a large mixture of enterprise, and fortitude, and disinterestedness, and the elements, though misguided and disarranged, by which the strength and happiness of a nation might have been cemented, die in such a manner, as to make death appear not evil, but good. The death of what is called a traitor, that is, a person who, from whatever motive, would abolish the government of the day, is as often a triumphant exhibition of suffering virtue, as the warning of a culprit. The multitude, instead of departing with a panic-stricken approbation of the laws which exhibited such a spectacle, are inspired with pity, admiration and sympathy; and the most generous among them feel an emulation to be the authors of such flattering emotions, as they experience stirring in their bosoms. Impressed by what they see and feel, they make no distinctive between the motives which incited the criminals to the action for which they suffer, or the heroic courage with which they turned into good that which their judges awarded to them as evil or the purpose itself of those actions, though that purpose may happen to be eminently pernicious. The laws in this case lose their sympathy, which it ought to be their chief object to secure, and in a participation of which consists their chief strength in maintaining those sanctions by which the parts of the social union are bound together, so as to produce, as nearly as possible, the ends for which it is instituted.

Secondly, — Persons of energetic character, in communities not modelled with philosophical skill to turn all the energies which they contain to the purposes of common good, are prone also to fall into the temptation of undertaking, and are peculiarly fitted for despising the perils attendant upon consummating, the most enormous crimes. Murder, rapes, extensive schemes of plunder are the actions of persons belonging to this class; and death is the penalty of conviction. But the coarseness of organization, peculiar to men capable of committing acts wholly selfish, is usually found

to be associated with a proportionate insensibility to fear or pain. Their sufferings communicate to those of the spectators, who may be liable to the commission of similar crimes a sense of the lightness of that event, when closely examined which, at a distance, as uneducated persons are accustomed to do, probably they regarded with horror. But a great majority of the spectators are so bound up in the interests and the habits of social union that no temptation would be sufficiently strong to induce them to a commission of the enormities to which this penalty is assigned. The more powerful, and the richer among them, — and a numerous class of little tradesmen are richer and more powerful than those who are employed by them, and the employer, in general, bears this relation to the employed, — regard their own wrongs as, in some degree, avenged, and their own rights secured by this punishment, inflicted as the penalty of whatever crime. In cases of murder or mutilation, this feeling is almost universal. In those, therefore, whom this exhibition does not awaken to the sympathy which extenuates crime and discredits the law which restrains it, it produces feelings more directly at war with the genuine purposes of political society. It excites those emotions which it is the chief object of civilization to extinguish for ever, and in the extinction of which alone there can be any hope of better institutions than those under which men now misgovern one another. Men feel that their revenge is gratified, and that their security is established by the extinction and the sufferings of beings, in most respects resembling themselves; and their daily occupations constraining them to a precise form in all their thoughts, they come to connect inseparably the idea of their own advantage with that of the death and torture of others. It is manifest that the object of sane polity is directly the reverse; and that laws founded upon reason, should accustom the gross vulgar to associate their ideas of security and of interest with the reformation, and the strict restraint, for that purpose alone, of those who might invade it.

The passion of revenge is originally nothing more than an habitual perception of the ideas of the sufferings of the person who inflicts an injury, as connected, as they are in a savage state, or in such portions of society as are yet undisciplined to civilization, with security that that injury will not be repeated in future. This feeling, engrafted upon superstition and confirmed by habit, at last loses sight of the only object for which it may be supposed to have been implanted, and becomes a passion and a duty to be pursued and fulfilled, even to the destruction of those ends to which it originally

tended. The other passions, both good and evil. Avarice, Remorse, Love, Patriotism, present a similar appearance; and to this principle of the mind over-shooting the mark at which it aims, we owe all that is eminently base or excellent in human nature; in providing for the nutriment or the extinction of which, consists the true art of the legislator. [Footnote: The savage and the illiterate are but faintly aware of the distinction between the future and the past; they make actions belonging to periods so distinct, the subjects of similar feelings; they live only in the present, or in the past, as it is present. It is in this that the philosopher excels one of the many; it is this which distinguishes the doctrine of philosophic necessity from fatalism; and that determination of the will, by which it is the active source of future events, from that liberty or indifference, to which the abstract liability of irremediable actions is attached, according to the notions of the vulgar.

This is the source of the erroneous excesses of Remorse and Revenge; the one extending itself over the future, and the other over the past; provinces in which their suggestions can only be the sources of evil. The purpose of a resolution to act more wisely and virtuously in future, and the sense of a necessity of caution in repressing an enemy, are the sources from which the enormous superstitions implied in the words cited have arisen.]

Nothing is more clear than that the infliction of punishment in general, in a degree which the reformation and the restraint of those who transgress the laws does not render indispensable, and none more than death, confirms all the inhuman and unsocial impulses of men. It is almost a proverbial remark, that those nations in which the penal code has been particularly mild, have been distinguished from all others by the rarity of crime. But the example is to be admitted to be equivocal. A more decisive argument is afforded by a consideration of the universal connexion of ferocity of manners, and a contempt of social ties, with the contempt of human life. Governments which derive their institutions from the existence of circumstances of barbarism and violence, with some rare exceptions perhaps, are bloody in proportion as they are despotic, and form the manners of their subjects to a sympathy with their own spirit.

The spectators who feel no abhorrence at a public execution, but rather a self-applauding superiority, and a sense of gratified indignation, are surely excited to the most inauspicious emotions. The first reflection of such a one is the sense of his own internal and actual worth, as preferable to that of the victim, whom circumstances have led to destruction. The meanest wretch is

impressed with a sense of his own comparative merit. He is one of those on whom the tower of Siloam fell not — he is such a one as Jesus Christ found not in all Samaria, who, in his own soul, throws the first stone at the woman taken in adultery. The popular religion of the country takes its designation from that illustrious person whose beautiful sentiment I have quoted. Any one who has stript from the doctrines of this person the veil of familiarity, will perceive how adverse their spirit is to feelings of this nature.

SPECULATIONS ON METAPHYSICS

I — THE MIND

It is an axiom in mental philosophy, that we can think of nothing which we have not perceived. When I say that we can think of nothing, I mean, we can imagine nothing, we can reason of nothing, we can remember nothing, we can foresee nothing. The most astonishing combinations of poetry, the subtlest deductions of logic and mathematics, are no other than combinations which the intellect makes of sensations according to its own laws. A catalogue of all the thoughts of the mind, and of all their possible modifications, is a cyclopedic history of the universe.

But, it will be objected, the inhabitants of the various planets of this and other solar systems; and the existence of a Power bearing the same relation to all that we perceive and are, as what we call a cause does to what we call effect, were never subjects of sensation, and yet the laws of mind almost universally suggest, according to the various disposition of each, a conjecture, a persuasion, or a conviction of their existence. The reply is simple; these thoughts are also to be included in the catalogue of existence; they are modes in which thoughts are combined; the objection only adds force to the conclusion, that beyond the limits of perception and thought nothing can exist.

Thoughts, or ideas, or notions, call them what you will, differ from each other, not in kind, but in force. It has commonly been supposed that those distinct thoughts which affect a number of persons, at regular intervals, during the passage of a multitude of other thoughts, which are called REAL or EXTERNAL OBJECTS, are totally different in kind from those which affect only a few persons, and which recur at irregular intervals, and are usually more obscure and indistinct, such as hallucinations, dreams, and the ideas of madness. No essential distinction between any one of these ideas, or any class of them, is founded on a correct observation of the nature of things, but merely on a consideration of what thoughts are most invariably subservient to the security and happiness of life; and if nothing more were expressed by the distinction, the philosopher might safely accommodate his language to that of the vulgar. But they pretend to assert an essential difference, which has no foundation in truth, and which suggests a narrow

and false conception of universal nature, the parent of the most fatal errors in speculation. A specific difference between every thought of the mind, is, indeed, a necessary consequence of that law by which it perceives diversity and number; but a generic and essential difference is wholly arbitrary. The principle of the agreement and similarity of all thoughts, is, that they are all thoughts; the principle of their disagreement consists in the variety and irregularity of the occasions on which they arise in the mind. That in which they agree, to that in which they differ, is as everything to nothing. Important distinctions, of various degrees of force, indeed, are to be established between them, if they were, as they may be, subjects of ethical and economical discussion; but that is a question altogether distinct. By considering all knowledge as bounded by perception, whose operations may be indefinitely combined, we arrive at a conception of Nature inexpressibly more magnificent, simple and true, than accords with the ordinary systems of complicated and partial consideration. Nor does a contemplation of the universe, in this comprehensive and synthetical view, exclude the subtlest analysis of its modifications and parts.

A scale might be formed, graduated according to the degrees of a combined ratio of intensity, duration, connexion, periods of recurrence, and utility, which would be the standard, according to which all ideas might be measured, and an uninterrupted chain of nicely shadowed distinctions would be observed, from the faintest impression on the senses, to the most distinct combination of those impressions; from the simplest of those combinations, to that mass of knowledge which, including our own nature, constitutes what we call the universe.

We are intuitively conscious of our own existence, and of that connexion in the train of our successive ideas, which we term our identity. We are conscious also of the existence of other minds; but not intuitively. Our evidence, with respect to the existence of other minds, is founded upon a very complicated relation of ideas, which it is foreign to the purpose of this treatise to anatomize. The basis of this relation is, undoubtedly, a periodical recurrence of masses of ideas, which our voluntary determinations have, in one peculiar direction, no power to circumscribe or to arrest, and against the recurrence of which they can only imperfectly provide. The irresistible laws of thought constrain us to believe that the precise limits of our actual ideas are not the actual limits of possible ideas; the law, according to which these

deductions are drawn, is called analogy; and this is the foundation of all our inferences, from one idea to another, inasmuch as they resemble each other.

We see trees, houses, fields, living beings in our own shape, and in shapes more or less analogous to our own. These are perpetually changing the mode of their existence relatively to us. To express the varieties of these modes, we say, WE MOVE, THEY MOVE; and as this motion is continual, though not uniform, we express our conception of the diversities of its course by — IT HAS BEEN, IT IS, IT SHALL BE. These diversities are events or objects, and are essential, considered relatively to human identity, for the existence of the human mind. For if the inequalities, produced by what has been termed the operations of the external universe, were levelled by the perception of our being, uniting and filling up their interstices, motion and mensuration, and time, and space; the elements of the human mind being thus abstracted, sensation and imagination cease. Mind cannot be considered pure.

II — WHAT METAPHYSICS ARE. ERRORS IN THE USUAL METHODS OF CONSIDERING THEM

We do not attend sufficiently to what passes within ourselves. We combine words, combined a thousand times before. In our minds we assume entire opinions; and in the expression of those opinions, entire phrases, when we would philosophize. Our whole style of expression and sentiment is infected with the tritest plagiarisms. Our words are dead, our thoughts are cold and borrowed.

Let us contemplate facts; let us, in the great study of ourselves, resolutely compel the mind to a rigid consideration of itself. We are not content with conjecture, and inductions, and syllogisms, in sciences regarding external objects. As in these, let us also, in considering the phenomena of mind, severely collect those facts which cannot be disputed. Metaphysics will thus possess this conspicuous advantage over every other science, that each student, by attentively referring to his own mind, may ascertain the authorities upon which any assertions regarding it are supported. There can thus be no deception, we ourselves being the depositaries of the evidence of the subject which we consider.

Metaphysics may be defined as an inquiry concerning those things belonging to, or connected with, the internal nature of man.

It is said that mind produces motion; and it might as well have been said, that motion produces mind.

III — DIFFICULTY OF ANALYSING THE HUMAN MIND

If it were possible that a person should give a faithful history of his being, from the earliest epochs of his recollection, a picture would be presented such as the world has never contemplated before. A mirror would be held up to all men in which they might behold their own recollections, and, in dim perspective, their shadowy hopes and fears, — all that they dare not, or that, daring and desiring, they could not expose to the open eyes of day. But thought can with difficulty visit the intricate and winding chambers which it inhabits. It is like a river whose rapid and perpetual stream flows outwards; — like one in dread who speeds through the recesses of some haunted pile, and dares not look behind. The caverns of the mind are obscure, and shadowy; or pervaded with a lustre, beautifully bright indeed, but shining not beyond their portals. If it were possible to be where we have been, vitally and indeed — if, at the moment of our presence there, we could define the results of our experience, — if the passage from sensation to reflection — from a state of passive perception to voluntary contemplation, were not so dizzying and so tumultuous, this attempt would be less difficult.

IV — HOW THE ANALYSIS SHOULD BE CARRIED ON

Most of the errors of philosophers have arisen from considering the human being in a point of view too detailed and circumscribed He is not a moral, and an intellectual, — but also, and pre-eminently, an imaginative being. His own mind is his law; his own mind is all things to him. If we would arrive at any knowledge which should be serviceable from the practical conclusions to which it leads, we ought to consider the mind of man and the universe as the great whole on which to exercise our speculations. Here, above all, verbal disputes ought to be laid aside, though this has long been their chosen field of battle. It imports little to inquire whether thought be distinct from the objects of thought. The use of the words EXTERNAL and INTERNAL, as applied to the establishment of this distinction, has been the symbol and the source of much dispute. This is merely an affair of words, and as the dispute deserves, to say, that when speaking of the objects of thought, we indeed only describe one of the forms of thought — or that,

speaking of thought, we only apprehend one of the operations of the universal system of beings.

V — CATALOGUE OF THE PHENOMENA OF DREAMS, AS CONNECTING SLEEPING AND WAKING

1. Let us reflect on our infancy, and give as faithfully as possible a relation of the events of sleep.

And first I am bound to present a faithful picture of my own peculiar nature relatively to sleep. I do not doubt that were every individual to imitate me, it would be found that among many circumstances peculiar to their individual nature, a sufficiently general resemblance would be found to prove the connexion existing between those peculiarities and the most universal phenomena. I shall employ caution, indeed, as to the facts which I state, that they contain nothing false or exaggerated. But they contain no more than certain elucidations of my own nature; concerning the degree in which it resembles, or differs from, that of others, I am by no means accurately aware. It is sufficient, however, to caution the reader against drawing general inferences from particular instances.

I omit the general instances of delusion in fever or delirium, as well as mere dreams considered in themselves. A delineation of this subject, however inexhaustible and interesting, is to be passed over. What is the connexion of sleeping and of waking?

2. I distinctly remember dreaming three several times, between intervals of two or more years, the same precise dream. It was not so much what is ordinarily called a dream; the single image, unconnected with all other images, of a youth who was educated at the same school with myself, presented itself in sleep. Even now, after the lapse of many years, I can never hear the name of this youth, without the three places where I dreamed of him presenting themselves distinctly to my mind.

3. In dreams, images acquire associations peculiar to dreaming; so that the idea of a particular house, when it recurs a second time in dreams, will have relation with the idea of the same house, in the first time, of a nature entirely different from that which the house excites, when seen or thought of in relation to waking ideas.

4. I have beheld scenes, with the intimate and unaccountable connexion of which with the obscure parts of my own nature, I have been irresistibly

impressed. I have beheld a scene which has produced no unusual effect on my thoughts. After the lapse of many years I have dreamed of this scene. It has hung on my memory, it has haunted my thoughts, at intervals, with the pertinacity of an object connected with human affections. I have visited this scene again. Neither the dream could be dissociated from the landscape, nor the landscape from the dream, nor feelings, such as neither singly could have awakened, from both.

But the most remarkable event of this nature, which ever occurred to me, happened five years ago at Oxford. I was walking with a friend, in the neighbourhood of that city, engaged in earnest and interesting conversation. We suddenly turned the corner of a lane, and the view, which its high banks and hedges had concealed, presented itself. The view consisted of a wind-mill, standing in one among many plashy meadows, inclosed with stone walls; the irregular and broken ground, between the wall and the road on which we stood; a long low hill behind the windmill, and a grey covering of uniform cloud spread over the evening sky. It was that season when the last leaf had just fallen from the scant and stunted ash. The scene surely was a common scene; the season and the hour little calculated to kindle lawless thought; it was a tame uninteresting assemblage of objects, such as would drive the imagination for refuge in serious and sober talk, to the evening fireside, and the dessert of winter fruits and wine. The effect which it produced on me was not such as could have been expected. I suddenly remembered to have seen that exact scene in some dream of long — . [Footnote: Here I was obliged to leave off, overcome by thrilling horror.]

[1815; publ. 1840]

SPECULATIONS ON MORALS

I — PLAN OF A TREATISE ON MORALS

That great science which regards nature and the operations of the human mind, is popularly divided into Morals and Metaphysics. The latter relates to a just classification, and the assignment of distinct names to its ideas; the former regards simply the determination of that arrangement of them which produces the greatest and most solid happiness. It is admitted that a virtuous or moral action, is that action which, when considered in all its accessories and consequences, is fitted to produce the highest pleasure to the greatest number of sensitive beings. The laws according to which all pleasure, since it cannot be equally felt by all sensitive beings, ought to be distributed by a voluntary agent, are reserved for a separate chapter.

The design of this little treatise is restricted to the development of the elementary principles of morals. As far as regards that purpose, metaphysical science will be treated merely so far as a source of negative truth; whilst morality will be considered as a science, respecting which we can arrive at positive conclusions.

The misguided imaginations of men have rendered the ascertaining of what IS NOT TRUE, the principal direct service which metaphysical science can bestow upon moral science. Moral science itself is the doctrine of the voluntary actions of man, as a sentient and social being. These actions depend on the thoughts in his mind. But there is a mass of popular opinion, from which the most enlightened persons are seldom wholly free, into the truth or falsehood of which it is incumbent on us to inquire, before we can arrive at any firm conclusions as to the conduct which we ought to pursue in the regulation of our own minds, or towards our fellow beings; or before we can ascertain the elementary laws, according to which these thoughts, from which these actions flow, are originally combined.

The object of the forms according to which human society is administered, is the happiness of the individuals composing the communities which they regard, and these forms are perfect or imperfect in proportion to the degree in which they promote this end.

This object is not merely the quantity of happiness enjoyed by individuals as sensitive beings, but the mode in which it should be

distributed among them as social beings. It is not enough, if such a coincidence can be conceived as possible, that one person or class of persons should enjoy the highest happiness, whilst another is suffering a disproportionate degree of misery. It is necessary that the happiness produced by the common efforts, and preserved by the common care, should be distributed according to the just claims of each individual; if not, although the quantity produced should be the same, the end of society would remain unfulfilled. The object is in a compound proportion to the quantity of happiness produced, and the correspondence of the mode in which it is distributed, to the elementary feelings of man as a social being.

The disposition in an individual to promote this object is called virtue; and the two constituent parts of virtue, benevolence and justice, are correlative with these two great portions of the only true object of all voluntary actions of a human being. Benevolence is the desire to be the author of good, and justice the apprehension of the manner in which good ought to be done.

Justice and benevolence result from the elementary laws of the human mind.

CHAPTER I ON THE NATURE OF VIRTUE

SECT. 1. General View of the Nature and Objects of Virtue. — 2. The Origin and Basis of Virtue, as founded on the Elementary Principles of Mind. — 3. The Laws which flow from the nature of Mind regulating the application of those principles to human actions; — 4. Virtue, a possible attribute of man.

We exist in the midst of a multitude of beings like ourselves, upon whose happiness most of our actions exert some obvious and decisive influence.

The regulation of this influence is the object of moral science. We know that we are susceptible of receiving painful or pleasurable impressions of greater or less intensity and duration. That is called good which produces pleasure; that is called evil which produces pain. These are general names, applicable to every class of causes, from which an overbalance of pain or pleasure may result. But when a human being is the active instrument of generating or diffusing happiness, the principle through which it is most effectually instrumental to that purpose, is called virtue. And benevolence, or the desire to be the author of good, united with justice, or an

apprehension of the manner in which that good is to be done, constitutes virtue.

But wherefore should a man be benevolent and just? The immediate emotions of his nature, especially in its most inartificial state, prompt him to inflict pain, and to arrogate dominion. He desires to heap superfluities to his own store, although others perish with famine. He is propelled to guard against the smallest invasion of his own liberty, though he reduces others to a condition of the most pitiless servitude. He is revengeful, proud and selfish. Wherefore should he curb these propensities?

It is inquired, for what reason a human being should engage in procuring the happiness, or refrain from producing the pain of another? When a reason is required to prove the necessity of adopting any system of conduct, what is it that the objector demands? He requires proof of that system of conduct being such as will most effectually promote the happiness of mankind. To demonstrate this, is to render a moral reason. Such is the object of virtue.

A common sophism, which, like many others, depends on the abuse of a metaphorical expression to a literal purpose, has produced much of the confusion which has involved the theory of morals. It is said that no person is bound to be just or kind, if, on his neglect, he should fail to incur some penalty. Duty is obligation. There can be no obligation without an obliger. Virtue is a law, to which it is the will of the lawgiver that we should conform; which will we should in no manner be bound to obey, unless some dreadful punishment were attached to disobedience. This is the philosophy of slavery and superstition.

In fact, no person can be BOUND or OBLIGED, without some power preceding to bind and oblige. If I observe a man bound hand and foot, I know that some one bound him. But if I observe him returning self-satisfied from the performance of some action, by which he has been the willing author of extensive benefit, I do not infer that the anticipation of hellish agonies, or the hope of heavenly reward, has constrained him to such an act.

. . . . . .

It remains to be stated in what manner the sensations which constitute the basis of virtue originate in the human mind; what are the laws which it receives there; how far the principles of mind allow it to be an attribute of a human being; and, lastly, what is the probability of persuading mankind to adopt it as a universal and systematic motive of conduct.

BENEVOLENCE

There is a class of emotions which we instinctively avoid. A human being, such as is man considered in his origin, a child a month old, has a very imperfect consciousness of the existence of other natures resembling itself. All the energies of its being are directed to the extinction of the pains with which it is perpetually assailed. At length it discovers that it is surrounded by natures susceptible of sensations similar to its own. It is very late before children attain to this knowledge. If a child observes, without emotion, its nurse or its mother suffering acute pain, it is attributable rather to ignorance than insensibility. So soon as the accents and gestures, significant of pain, are referred to the feelings which they express, they awaken in the mind of the beholder a desire that they should cease. Pain is thus apprehended to be evil for its own sake, without any other necessary reference to the mind by which its existence is perceived, than such as is indispensable to its perception. The tendencies of our original sensations, indeed, all have for their object the preservation of our individual being. But these are passive and unconscious. In proportion as the mind acquires an active power, the empire of these tendencies becomes limited. Thus an infant, a savage, and a solitary beast, is selfish, because its mind is incapable of receiving an accurate intimation of the nature of pain as existing in beings resembling itself. The inhabitant of a highly civilized community will more acutely sympathize with the sufferings and enjoyments of others, than the inhabitant of a society of a less degree of civilization. He who shall have cultivated his intellectual powers by familiarity with the highest specimens of poetry and philosophy, will usually sympathize more than one engaged in the less refined functions of manual labour. Every one has experience of the fact, that to sympathize with the sufferings of another, is to enjoy a transitory oblivion of his own.

The mind thus acquires, by exercise, a habit, as it were, of perceiving and abhorring evil, however remote from the immediate sphere of sensations with which that individual mind is conversant. Imagination or mind employed in prophetically imaging forth its objects, is that faculty of human nature on which every gradation of its progress, nay, every, the minutest, change, depends. Pain or pleasure, if subtly analysed, will be found to consist entirely in prospect. The only distinction between the selfish man and the virtuous man is, that the imagination of the former is

confined within a narrow limit, whilst that of the latter embraces a comprehensive circumference. In this sense, wisdom and virtue may be said to be inseparable, and criteria of each other. Selfishness is the offspring of ignorance and mistake; it is the portion of unreflecting infancy, and savage solitude, or of those whom toil or evil occupations have blunted or rendered torpid; disinterested benevolence is the product of a cultivated imagination, and has an intimate connexion with all the arts which add ornament, or dignity, or power, or stability to the social state of man. Virtue is thus entirely a refinement of civilized life; a creation of the human mind; or, rather, a combination which it has made, according to elementary rules contained within itself, of the feelings suggested by the relations established between man and man.

All the theories which have refined and exalted humanity, or those which have been devised as alleviations of its mistakes and evils, have been based upon the elementary emotions of disinterestedness, which we feel to constitute the majesty of our nature. Patriotism, as it existed in the ancient republics, was never, as has been supposed, a calculation of personal advantages. When Mutius Scaevola thrust his hand into the burning coals, and Regulus returned to Carthage, and Epicharis sustained the rack silently, in the torments of which she knew that she would speedily perish, rather than betray the conspirators to the tyrant [Footnote: Tacitus.]; these illustrious persons certainly made a small estimate of their private interest. If it be said that they sought posthumous fame; instances are not wanting in history which prove that men have even defied infamy for the sake of good. But there is a great error in the world with respect to the selfishness of fame. It is certainly possible that a person should seek distinction as a medium of personal gratification. But the love of fame is frequently no more than a desire that the feelings of others should confirm, illustrate, and sympathize with, our own. In this respect it is allied with all that draws us out of ourselves. It is the ‘last infirmity of noble minds’. Chivalry was likewise founded on the theory of self-sacrifice. Love possesses so extraordinary a power over the human heart, only because disinterestedness is united with the natural propensities. These propensities themselves are comparatively impotent in cases where the imagination of pleasure to be given, as well as to be received, does not enter into the account. Let it not be objected that patriotism, and chivalry, and sentimental love, have been the fountains of enormous mischief. They are cited only to establish the

proposition that, according to the elementary principles of mind, man is capable of desiring and pursuing good for its own sake.

JUSTICE

The benevolent propensities are thus inherent in the human mind. We are impelled to seek the happiness of others. We experience a satisfaction in being the authors of that happiness. Everything that lives is open to impressions or pleasure and pain. We are led by our benevolent propensities to regard every human being indifferently with whom we come in contact. They have preference only with respect to those who offer themselves most obviously to our notice. Human beings are indiscriminating and blind; they will avoid inflicting pain, though that pain should be attended with eventual benefit; they will seek to confer pleasure without calculating the mischief that may result. They benefit one at the expense of many.

There is a sentiment in the human mind that regulates benevolence in its application as a principle of action. This is the sense of justice. Justice, as well as benevolence, is an elementary law of human nature. It is through this principle that men are impelled to distribute any means of pleasure which benevolence may suggest the communication of to others, in equal portions among an equal number of applicants. If ten men are shipwrecked on a desert island, they distribute whatever subsistence may remain to them, into equal portions among themselves. If six of them conspire to deprive the remaining four of their share, their conduct is termed unjust.

The existence of pain has been shown to be a circumstance which the human mind regards with dissatisfaction, and of which it desires the cessation. It is equally according to its nature to desire that the advantages to be enjoyed by a limited number of persons should be enjoyed equally by all. This proposition is supported by the evidence of indisputable facts. Tell some ungarbled tale of a number of persons being made the victims of the enjoyments of one, and he who would appeal in favour of any system which might produce such an evil to the primary emotions of our nature, would have nothing to reply. Let two persons, equally strangers, make application for some benefit in the possession of a third to bestow, and to which he feels that they have an equal claim. They are both sensitive beings; pleasure and pain affect them alike.

CHAPTER II

It is foreign to the general scope of this little treatise to encumber a simple argument by controverting any of the trite objections of habit or fanaticism. But there are two; the first, the basis of all political mistake, and the second, the prolific cause and effect of religious error, which it seems useful to refute.

First, it is inquired, 'Wherefore should a man be benevolent and just?' The answer has been given in the preceding chapter.

If a man persists to inquire why he ought to promote the happiness of mankind, he demands a mathematical or metaphysical reason for a moral action. The absurdity of this scepticism is more apparent, but not less real than the exacting a moral reason for a mathematical or metaphysical fact. If any person should refuse to admit that all the radii of a circle are of equal length, or that human actions are necessarily determined by motives, until it could be proved that these radii and these actions uniformly tended to the production of the greatest general good, who would not wonder at the unreasonable and capricious association of his ideas?

The writer of a philosophical treatise may, I imagine, at this advanced era of human intellect, be held excused from entering into a controversy with those reasoners, if such there are, who would claim an exemption from its decrees in favour of any one among those diversified systems of obscure opinion respecting morals, which, under the name of religions, have in various ages and countries prevailed among mankind. Besides that if, as these reasoners have pretended, eternal torture or happiness will ensue as the consequence of certain actions, we should be no nearer the possession of a standard to determine what actions were right and wrong, even if this pretended revelation, which is by no means the case, had furnished us with a complete catalogue of them. The character of actions as virtuous or vicious would by no means be determined alone by the personal advantage or disadvantage of each moral agent individually considered. Indeed, an action is often virtuous in proportion to the greatness of the personal calamity which the author willingly draws upon himself by daring to perform it. It is because an action produces an overbalance of pleasure or pain to the greatest number of sentient beings, and not merely because its consequences are beneficial or injurious to the author of that action, that it is good or evil. Nay, this latter consideration has a tendency to pollute the

purity of virtue, inasmuch as it consists in the motive rather than in the consequences of an action. A person who should labour for the happiness of mankind lest he should be tormented eternally in Hell, would, with reference to that motive, possess as little claim to the epithet of virtuous, as he who should torture, imprison, and burn them alive, a more usual and natural consequence of such principles, for the sake of the enjoyments of Heaven.

My neighbour, presuming on his strength, may direct me to perform or to refrain from a particular action; indicating a certain arbitrary penalty in the event of disobedience within power to inflict. My action, if modified by his menaces, can no degree participate in virtue. He has afforded me no criterion as to what is right or wrong. A king, or an assembly of men, may publish a proclamation affixing any penalty to any particular action, but that is not immoral because such penalty is affixed. Nothing is more evident than that the epithet of virtue is inapplicable to the refraining from that action on account of the evil arbitrarily attached to it. If the action is in itself beneficial, virtue would rather consist in not refraining from it, but in firmly defying the personal consequences attached to its performance.

Some usurper of supernatural energy might subdue the whole globe to his power; he might possess new and unheard-of resources for enduing his punishments with the most terrible attributes or pain. The torments of his victims might be intense in their degree, and protracted to an infinite duration. Still the ‘will of the lawgiver’ would afford no surer criterion as to what actions were right or wrong. It would only increase the possible virtue of those who refuse to become the instruments of his tyranny.

II — MORAL SCIENCE CONSISTS IN CONSIDERING THE DIFFERENCE, NOT THE RESEMBLANCE, OF PERSONS

The internal influence, derived from the constitution of the mind from which they flow, produces that peculiar modification of actions, which makes them intrinsically good or evil.

To attain an apprehension of the importance of this distinction, let us visit, in imagination, the proceedings of some metropolis. Consider the multitude of human beings who inhabit it, and survey, in thought, the actions of the several classes into which they are divided. Their obvious actions are apparently uniform: the stability of human society seems to be

maintained sufficiently by the uniformity of the conduct of its members, both with regard to themselves, and with regard to others. The labourer arises at a certain hour, and applies himself to the task enjoined him. The functionaries of government and law are regularly employed in their offices and courts. The trader holds a train of conduct from which he never deviates. The ministers of religion employ an accustomed language, and maintain a decent and equable regard. The army is drawn forth, the motions of every soldier are such as they were expected to be; the general commands, and his words are echoed from troop to troop. The domestic actions of men are, for the most part, undistinguishable one from the other, at a superficial glance. The actions which are classed under the general appellation of marriage, education, friendship, &c., are perpetually going on, and to a superficial glance, are similar one to the other.

But, if we would see the truth of things, they must be stripped of this fallacious appearance of uniformity. In truth, no one action has, when considered in its whole extent, any essential resemblance with any other. Each individual, who composes the vast multitude which we have been contemplating, has a peculiar frame of mind, which, whilst the features of the great mass of his actions remain uniform, impresses the minuter lineaments with its peculiar hues. Thus, whilst his life, as a whole, is like the lives of other men, in detail, it is most unlike; and the more subdivided the actions become; that is, the more they enter into that class which have a vital influence on the happiness of others and his own, so much the more are they distinct from those of other men.

Those little, nameless, unremembered acts
Of kindness and of love,

as well as those deadly outrages which are inflicted by a look, a word — or less — the very refraining from some faint and most evanescent expression of countenance; these flow from a profounder source than the series of our habitual conduct, which, it has been already said, derives its origin from without. These are the actions, and such as these, which make human life what it is, and are the fountains of all the good and evil with which its entire surface is so widely and impartially overspread; and though they are called minute, they are called so in compliance with the blindness of those who cannot estimate their importance. It is in the due appreciating

the general effects of their peculiarities, and in cultivating the habit of acquiring decisive knowledge respecting the tendencies arising out of them in particular cases, that the most important part of moral science consists. The deepest abyss of these vast and multitudinous caverns, it is necessary that we should visit.

This is the difference between social and individual man. Not that this distinction is to be considered definite, or characteristic of one human being as compared with another; it denotes rather two classes of agency, common in a degree to every human being. None is exempt, indeed, from that species of influence which affects, as it were, the surface of his being, and gives the specific outline to his conduct. Almost all that is ostensible submits to that legislature created by the general representation of the past feelings of mankind — imperfect as it is from a variety of causes, as it exists in the government, the religion, and domestic habits. Those who do not nominally, yet actually, submit to the same power. The external features of their conduct, indeed, can no more escape it, than the clouds can escape from the stream of the wind; and his opinion, which he often hopes he has dispassionately secured from all contagion of prejudice and vulgarity, would be found, on examination, to be the inevitable excrescence of the very usages from which he vehemently dissents. Internally all is conducted otherwise; the efficiency, the essence, the vitality of actions, derives its colour from what is no ways contributed to from any external source. Like the plant which while it derives the accident of its size and shape from the soil in which it springs, and is cankered, or distorted, or inflated, yet retains those qualities which essentially divide it from all others; so that hemlock continues to be poison, and the violet does not cease to emit its odour in whatever soil it may grow.

We consider our own nature too superficially. We look on all that in ourselves with which we can discover a resemblance in others; and consider those resemblances as the materials of moral knowledge. It is in the differences that it actually consists.

[1815; publ. 1840]

ESSAY ON THE LITERATURE, THE ARTS, AND THE MANNERS OF THE ATHENIANS

A FRAGMENT

The period which intervened between the birth of Pericles and the death of Aristotle, is undoubtedly, whether considered in itself, or with reference to the effects which it has produced upon the subsequent destinies of civilized man, the most memorable in the history of the world. What was the combination of moral and political circumstances which produced so unparalleled a progress during that period in literature and the arts; — why that progress, so rapid and so sustained, so soon received a check, and became retrograde, — are problems left to the wonder and conjecture of posterity. The wrecks and fragments of those subtle and profound minds, like the ruins of a fine statue, obscurely suggest to us the grandeur and perfection of the whole. Their very language — a type of the understandings of which it was the creation and the image — in variety, in simplicity, in flexibility, and in copiousness, excels every other language of the western world. Their sculptures are such as we, in our presumption, assume to be the models of ideal truth and beauty, and to which no artist of modern times can produce forms in any degree comparable. Their paintings, according to Pliny and Pausanias, were full of delicacy and harmony; and some even were powerfully pathetic, so as to awaken, like tender music or tragic poetry, the most overwhelming emotions. We are accustomed to conceive the painters of the sixteenth century, as those who have brought their art to the highest perfection, probably because none of the ancient paintings have been preserved. For all the inventive arts maintain, as it were, a sympathetic connexion between each other, being no more than various expressions of one internal power, modified by different circumstances, either of an individual, or of society; and the paintings of that period would probably bear the same relation as is confessedly borne by the sculptures to all succeeding ones. Of their music we know little; but the effects which it is said to have produced, whether they be attributed to the skill of the composer, or the sensibility of his audience, are far more powerful than any which we experience from the music of our own times; and if, indeed, the melody of their compositions were more tender and

delicate, and inspiring, than the melodies of some modern European nations, their superiority in this art must have been something wonderful, and wholly beyond conception.

Their poetry seems to maintain a very high, though not so disproportionate a rank, in the comparison. Perhaps Shakespeare, from the variety and comprehension of his genius, is to be considered, on the whole, as the greatest individual mind, of which we have specimens remaining. Perhaps Dante created imaginations of greater loveliness and energy than any that are to be found in the ancient literature of Greece. Perhaps nothing has been discovered in the fragments of the Greek lyric poets equivalent to the sublime and chivalric sensibility of Petrarch. — But, as a poet. Homer must be acknowledged to excel Shakespeare in the truth, the harmony, the sustained grandeur, the satisfying completeness of his images, their exact fitness to the illustration, and to that to which they belong. Nor could Dante, deficient in conduct, plan, nature, variety, and temperance, have been brought into comparison with these men, but for those fortunate isles laden with golden fruit, which alone could tempt any one to embark in the misty ocean of his dark and extravagant fiction.

But, omitting the comparison of individual minds, which can afford no general inference, how superior was the spirit and system of their poetry to that of any other period! So that had any other genius equal in other respects to the greatest that ever enlightened the world, arisen in that age, he would have been superior to all, from this circumstance alone — that had conceptions would have assumed a more harmonious and perfect form. For it is worthy of observation, that whatever the poet of that age produced is as harmonious and perfect as possible. In a drama, for instance, were the composition of a person of inferior talent, it was still homogeneous and free from inequalities it was a whole, consistent with itself. The compositions of great minds bore throughout the sustained stamp of their greatness. In the poetry of succeeding ages the expectations are often exalted on Icarian wings, and fall, too much disappointed to give a memory and a name to the oblivious pool in which they fell.

In physical knowledge Aristotle and Theophrastus had already — no doubt assisted by the labours of those of their predecessor whom they criticize — made advances worthy of the maturity of science. The astonishing invention of geometry, that series of discoveries which have enabled man to command the element and foresee future events, before the

subjects of his ignorant wonder, and which have opened as it were the doors of the mysteries of nature, had already been brought to great perfection. Metaphysics, the science of man's intimate nature, and logic, or the grammar and elementary principles of that science received from the latter philosophers of the Periclean age a firm basis. All our more exact philosophy is built upon the labours of these great men, and many of the words which we employ in metaphysical distinctions were invented by them to give accuracy and system to their reasonings. The science of morals, or the voluntary conduct of men in relation to themselves or others, dates from this epoch. How inexpressibly bolder and more pure were the doctrines of those great men, in comparison with the timid maxims which prevail in the writings of the most esteemed modern moralists! They were such as Phocion, and Epaminondas, and Timoleon, who formed themselves on their influence, were to the wretched heroes of our own age.

Their political and religious institutions are more difficult to bring into comparison with those of other times. A summary idea may be formed of the worth of any political and religious system, by observing the comparative degree of happiness and of intellect produced under its influence. And whilst many institution and opinions, which in ancient Greece were obstacles to the improvement of the human race, have been abolished among modern nations, how many pernicious superstitions and new contrivances of misrule, and unheard-of complications of public mischief, have not been invented among them by the ever-watchful spirit of avarice and tyranny!

The modern nations of the civilized world owe the progress which they have made — as well in those physical sciences in which they have already excelled their masters, as in the moral and intellectual inquiries, in which, with all the advantage of the experience of the latter, it can scarcely be said that they have yet equalled them, — to what is called the revival of learning; that is, the study of the writers of the age which preceded and immediately followed the government of Pericles, or of subsequent writers, who were, so to speak, the rivers flowing from those immortal fountains. And though there seems to be a principle in the modern world, which, should circumstances analogous to those which modelled the intellectual resources of the age to which we refer, into so harmonious a proportion, again arise, would arrest and perpetuate them, and consign their results to a more equal, extensive, and lasting improvement of the condition of man —

though justice and the true meaning of human society are, if not more accurately, more generally understood; though perhaps men know more, and therefore are more, as a mass, yet this principle has never been called into action, and requires indeed a universal and an almost appalling change in the system of existing things. The study of modern history is the study of kings, financiers, statesmen, and priests. The history of ancient Greece is the study of legislators, philosophers, and poets; it is the history of men, compared with the history of titles. What the Greeks were, was a reality, not a promise. And what we are and hope to be, is derived, as it were, from the influence and inspiration of these glorious generations.

Whatever tends to afford a further illustration of the manners and opinions of those to whom we owe so much, and who were perhaps, on the whole, the most perfect specimens of humanity of whom we have authentic record, were infinitely valuable. Let us see their errors, their weaknesses, their daily actions, their familiar conversation, and catch the tone of their society. When we discover how far the most admirable community ever framed was removed from that perfection to which human society is impelled by some active power within each bosom to aspire, how great ought to be our hopes, how resolute our struggles! For the Greeks of the Periclean age were widely different from us. It is to be lamented that no modern writer has hitherto dared to show them precisely as they were. Barthelemi cannot be denied the praise of industry and system; but he never forgets that he is a Christian and a Frenchman. Wieland, in his delightful novels, makes indeed a very tolerable Pagan, but cherishes too many political prejudices, and refrains from diminishing the interest of his romances by painting sentiments in which no European of modern times can possibly sympathize. There is no book which shows the Greeks precisely as they were; they seem all written for children with the caution that no practice or sentiment, highly inconsistent with our present manners, should be mentioned, lest those manners should receive outrage and violation. But there are many to whom the Greek language is inaccessible, who ought not to be excluded by this prudery from possessing an exact and comprehensive conception of the history of man; for there is no knowledge concerning what man has been and may be, from partaking of which a person can depart, without becoming in some degree more philosophical, tolerant, and just.

One of the chief distinctions between the manners of ancient Greece and modern Europe, consisted in the regulations and the sentiments respecting sexual intercourse. Whether this difference arises from some imperfect influence of the doctrines of Jesus, who alleges the absolute and unconditional equality of all human beings, or from the institutions of chivalry, or from a certain fundamental difference of physical nature existing in the Celts, or from a combination of all or any of these causes acting on each other, is a question worthy of voluminous investigation. The fact is, that the modern Europeans have in this circumstance, and in the abolition of slavery, made an improvement the most decisive in the regulation of human society; and all the virtue and the wisdom of the Periclean age arose under other institutions, in spite of the diminution which personal slavery and the inferiority of women, recognized by law and opinion, must have produced in the delicacy, the strength, the comprehensiveness, and the accuracy of their conceptions, in moral, political, and metaphysical science, and perhaps in every other art and science.

The women, thus degraded, became such as it was expected they would become. They possessed, except with extraordinary exceptions, the habits and the qualities of slaves. They were probably not extremely beautiful; at least there was no such disproportion in the attractions of the external form between the female and male sex among the Greeks, as exists among the modern Europeans. They were certainly devoid of that moral and intellectual loveliness with which the acquisition of knowledge and the cultivation of sentiment animates, as with another life of overpowering grace, the lineaments and the gestures of every form which they inhabit. Their eyes could not have been deep and intricate from the workings of the mind, and could have entangled no heart in soul-enwoven labyrinths.

Let it not be imagined that because the Greeks were deprived of its legitimate object, they were incapable of sentimental love; and that this passion is the mere child of chivalry and the literature of modern times. This object or its archetype for ever exists in the mind, which selects among those who resemble it that which most resembles it; and instinctively fills up the interstices of the imperfect image, in the same manner as the imagination moulds and completes the shapes in clouds, or in the fire, into the resemblances of whatever form, animal, building, &c., happens to be present to it. Man is in his wildest state a social being: a certain degree of

civilization and refinement ever produces the want of sympathies still more intimate and complete; and the gratification of the senses is no longer all that is sought in sexual connexion. It soon becomes a very small part of that profound and complicated sentiment, which we call love, which is rather the universal thirst for a communion not only of the senses, but of our whole nature, intellectual, imaginative and sensitive, and which, when individualized, becomes an imperious necessity, only to be satisfied by the complete or partial, actual or supposed fulfilment of its claims. This want grows more powerful in proportion to the development which our nature receives from civilization, for man never ceases to be a social being. The sexual impulse, which is only one, and often a small part of those claims, serves, from its obvious and external nature, as a kind of type or expression of the rest, a common basis, an acknowledged and visible link. Still it is a claim which even derives a strength not its own from the accessory circumstances which surround it, and one which our nature thirsts to satisfy. To estimate this, observe the degree of intensity and durability of the love of the male towards the female in animals and savages and acknowledge all the duration and intensity observable in the love of civilized beings beyond that of savages to be produced from other causes. In the susceptibility of the external senses there is probably no important difference.

Among the ancient Greeks the male sex, one half of the human race, received the highest cultivation and refinement: whilst the other, so far as intellect is concerned, were educated as slaves and were raised but few degrees in all that related to moral of intellectual excellence above the condition of savages. The gradations in the society of man present us with slow improvement in this respect. The Roman women held a higher consideration in society, and were esteemed almost as the equal partners with their husbands in the regulation of domestic economy and the education of their children. The practices and customs of modern Europe are essentially different from and incomparably less pernicious than either, however remote from what an enlightened mind cannot fail to desire as the future destiny of human beings.

[1818; publ. 1840]

A PHILOSOPHICAL VIEW OF REFORM

1st. Sentiment of the Necessity of change.
2nd. Practicability and Utility of such change.
3rd. State of Parties as regards it.
4th. Probable Mode — Desirable Mode.

Let us believe not only that *it* is necessary because it is just and ought to be, but necessary because it is inevitable and must be.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Those who imagine that their personal The Rise interest is directly or indirectly concerned in °f Modem maintaining the power in which they are clothed by the existing institutions or English. Government do not acknowledge the necessity of a material change in those institutions.

With this exception, there is no inhabitant of the British Empire of mature age and perfect understanding not fully persuaded of the necessity of Reform.

From the dissolution of the Roman Empire, that vast and successful scheme for the enslaving *of* the most civilised portion of mankind, to the epoch of the French Revolution, have succeeded a series of schemes, on a smaller scale, operating to the same effect. Names borrowed from the life and opinions of Jesus Christ were employed as symbols of domination and imposture; and a system of liberty and equality — for such was the system planted by that great Reformer — was perverted to support oppression. Not his doctrines, for they are too simple and direct to be susceptible of such perversion, but the mere names. Such was the origin of the Catholic Church, which, together with the several dynasties then beginning to consolidate themselves in Europe, means, being interpreted, a plan according to which the cunning and selfish few have employed the fears and hopes of the ignorant many to the establishment of their own power and the destruction of the real interests of all.

The Republics and municipal Governments of Italy opposed for some time a systematic and effectual resistance to the all-surrounding tyranny. The Lombard League defeated the armies of the despot in open field, and until Florence was betrayed to those polished tyrants, the Medici, Freedom had one citadel wherein it could find refuge from a world which was its enemy. Florence, long balanced, divided and weakened the strength of the Empire and the Popedom. To this cause, if to anything, was due the undisputed superiority of Italy in literature and the arts over all its contemporary nations, that union ol energy and of beauty which distinguishes from all other poets the writings of Dante, that restlessness of fervid power which expressed itself in painting and sculpture, and in daring

architectural forms, and from which, and conjointly from the creations of Athens, its predecessor and its image, Raphael and Michael Angelo drew the inspiration which created those forms and colours now the astonishment of the world. The father of our own literature, Chaucer, wrought from the simple and powerful language of a nursling of this Republic the basis of our own literature. And thus we owe, among other causes, the exact condition belonging to intellectual existence to the generous disdain of submission which burned in the bosoms of men who filled a distant generation and inhabited other lands.

When this resistance was overpowered, as what resistance to fraud and tyranny has not been overpowered? another was even then maturing. The progress of philosophy and civilization which ended in that imperfect emancipation of mankind from the yoke of priests and kings called the Reformation, had already commenced. Exasperated by their long sufferings, inflamed by the sparks of that superstition from the flames of which they were emerging, the poor rose against their natural enemies, the rich, and repaid with bloody interest the tyranny of ages. One of the signs of the times was that the oppressed peasantry rose like the negro slaves of West Indian plantations, and murdered their tyrants when they were unaware. So dear is power that the tyrants themselves neither then, nor now, nor ever, left or leave a path to freedom but through their own blood. The contest then waged under the names of religion which have seldom been any more than popular and visible symbols which express power in some shape or other, asserted by one party and disclaimed by the other, ended; and the result, though partial and imperfect, is perhaps the most animating that the philanthropist can contemplate in the history of man. The Republic of Holland, which has been so long an armoury of the arrows of learning by which superstition has been wounded even to death, was established by this contest. What though the name of Republic — and by whom but by conscience-stricken tyrants would it be extinguished — is no more? The Republics of Switzerland derived from this event their consolidation and their union.

From England then first began to pass away the stain of conquest. The exposure of a certain portion of religious imposture drew with it an enquiry into political imposture, and was attended with an extraordinary exertion of the energies of intellectual power. Shakespeare and Lord Bacon and the great writers of the age of Elizabeth and James I were at once the effects of

the new spirit in men's minds, and the causes of its more complete development. By rapid gradations the nation was conducted to the temporary abolition of aristocracy and episcopacy, and *to* the mighty example which, *c* in teaching nations how to live', England afforded to the world — of bringing to public justice one of those chiefs of a conspiracy of privileged murderers and robbers whose impunity had been the consecration of crime. [The maxim that criminals should be pitied and reformed, not detested and punished, alone affords a source of....]

After the selfish passions and temporizing interests of men had enlisted themselves to produce and establish the Restoration of Charles II the unequal combat was renewed under the reign of his successor, and that compromise between the unextinguishable spirit of Liberty, and the ever watchful spirit of fraud and tyranny, called the Revolution had place. On this occasion monarchy and aristocracy and episcopacy were at once established and limited by law. Unfortunately they lost no more in extent of power than they gained in security of possession.

Meanwhile those by whom they were established acknowledged and declared that the Will of the People was the source from which those powers, in this instance, derived the right to subsist. A man has no right to be a King or a Lord or a Bishop but so long as it is for the benefit of the People and so long as the People judge that it is for their benefit that he should impersonate that character. The solemn establishment of this maxim as the basis of our constitutional law, more than any beneficial and energetic application of it to the circumstances of the era of its promulgation, was the fruit of that vaunted event. Correlative with this series of events in England was the commencement of a new epoch in the history of the progress of civilization and society.

That superstition which has disguised itself under the name of the system of Jesus subsisted under all its forms, even where it had been separated from those things especially considered as abuses by the multitude, in the shape of an intolerant and oppressive hierarchy. Catholics massacred Protestants and Protestants proscribed Catholics and extermination was the sanction of each faith within the limits of the power of its professors. The New Testament is in everyone's hand, and the few who ever read it with the simple sincerity of an unbiassed judgement may perceive how distinct from the opinions of any of those professing themselves orthodox were the doctrines and the actions of Jesus Christ. At the period of the Reformation

this test was applied, this judgement formed of the then existing hierarchy, and the same compromise was then made between the spirit of truth and the spirit of imposture after the struggle which ploughed up the area of the human mind, as was made in the particular instance of England between the spirit of freedom and the spirit of tyranny at that event called the Revolution. In both instances the maxims so solemnly recorded remain as trophies of our difficult and incomplete victory, planted on the enemies' soil. The will of the People to change their government is an acknowledged right in the Constitution of England. The protesting against religious dogmas which present themselves to his mind as false is the inalienable prerogative of every human being.

The new epoch was marked by the com-Religious mencement of deeper enquiries into the point an(* of human nature than are compatible with an unreserved belief in any of those popular mistakes upon which popular systems of faith with respect to the cause and agencies of the universe, with all their superstructure of political arid religious tyranny,1 are built. Lord Bacon, Spinoza, Hobbes, Boyle, Montaigne, regulated the reasoning powers, criticized the history, exposed the past errors by illustrating their causes and their connexion, and anatomized the inmost nature of social man. Then, with a less interval of time than of genius, followed Locke and the philosophers of his exact and intelligible but superficial school. Their illustrations of some of the minor consequences of the doctrines established by the sublime genius of their predecessors were correct, popular, simple and energetic. Above all, they indicated inferences the most incompatible with the popular religions and the established governments of Europe. [Philosophy went now into the enchanted forest of the demons of worldly power, as the pioneer of the overgrowth of ages.] Berkeley and Hume, and Hartley at a later age, following the traces of these in-

1 Here, in a footnote, comes an unfinished sentence apparently intended to be worked into the above passage:

4 Regular and graduated systems of alternate slavery and tyranny, by which all except the lowest and the largest class were to be gainers in the materials of subsistence and ostentation at the expense of that class, the means being fraud and force, were established in the shape of feudal monarchies upon the ruins of the... ‘ ductions, have clearly established the certainty of our ignorance with respect to those obscure questions which under the name of religious truths have been the watchwords of contention

and symbols of unjust power ever since they were distorted by the narrow passions of the immediate followers of Jesus from that meaning to which philosophers are even now restoring them. A crowd of writers in France seized upon the most popular topics of these doctrines, and developing those particular portions of the new philosophy which conducted to inferences at war with the dreadful oppressions under which that country groaned, made familiar to mankind the falsehood of the mediaeval pretences of theirreligious and political oppressors. Considered as philosophers their error seems to have consisted chiefly in a limitation of view; they told the truth, but not the whole truth. This might have arisen from the terrible sufferings of their countrymen inviting them rather to apply a portion of what had already been discovered to their immediate relief, than to pursue one interest, the abstractions of thought, as the great philosophers who preceded them had done, for the sake of a future and more universal advantage. Whilst that philosophy which, burying itself in the obscure part of our nature, regards the truth and falsehood of dogmas relating to the cause of the universe, and the nature and manner of man's relation with it, was thus stripping Power of its darkest mask, Political Philosophy, or that which considers the relations of man as a social being, was assuming a precise form. That philosophy indeed sprang from and maintained a connexion with that other as its parent. What would Swift and Bolingbroke and Sidney and Locke and Montesquieu, or even Rousseau, not to speak of political philosophers of our own age, Godwin and Bentham, have been but for Lord Bacon, Montaigne and Spinoza, and the other great luminaries of the preceding epoch? Something excellent and eminent, no doubt, the least of these would have been, but something different from and inferior to what they are. A series of these writers illustrated with more or less success the principles of human nature as applied to man in political society. A thirst for accommodating the existing forms according to which mankind are found divided to those rules of freedom and equality which have been discovered as being the elementary principles according to which the happiness resulting from the social union ought to be produced and distributed, was kindled by these enquiries. Contemporary with this condition of the intellect all the powers of mankind, though in most cases under forms highly inauspicious *began* to develop themselves with uncommon energy. The mechanical sciences attained to a degree of perfection which, though obscurely foreseen by Lord Bacon, it

had been accounted madness to have prophesied in a preceding age. Commerce was pursued with a perpetually increasing vigour, and the same area of the Earth was perpetually compelled to furnish more and more subsistence. The means and sources of knowledge were thus increased together with knowledge itself, and the instruments of knowledge. The benefit of this increase of the powers of man became, in consequence of the inartificial1 forms into which mankind was distributed, an instrument of his additional evil. The capabilities ot happiness were increased, and applied to the augmentation of misery. Modern society is thus an engine assumed to be for useful purposes, whose force is by a system of subtle mechanism augmented to the highest pitch, but which, instead of grinding corn or raising water acts against itself and is perpetually wearing away or breaking to pieces the wheels of which it is composed. The result of the labours of the political philosophers has been the establishment of the principle of Utility as the substance, and liberty and equality as the forms according to which the concerns of 1 *Sic* in the MS. The intention must have been to write 4artificial % unless by * inartificial' Shelley meant badly designed. — (ED.) human life ought to be administered. By this test the various institutions regulating political society have been tried, and as the undigested growth of the private passions, errors, and interests of barbarians and oppressors have been condemned. And many new theories, more or less perfect, but all superior to the mass of evil which they would supplant, have been given to the world.

The United States.

The system of government in the United States of America was the first practical illustration of the new philosophy. Sufficiently remote, it will be confessed, from the accuracy of ideal excellence is that representative system which will soon cover the extent of that vast Continent. But it is scarcely less remote from the insolent and contaminating tyrannies under which, with some limitation of the terms as regards England, Europe groaned at the period of the successful rebellion of America. America holds forth the victorious example of an immensely populous, and as far as the external arts of life are concerned, a highly civilized community administered according to republican forms. It has no king, that is it has no officer to whom wealth and from whom corruption flow. It has no hereditary oligarchy, that is it acknowledges no order of men privileged to cheat and insult the rest of the members of the State, and who inherit the

right of legislating and judging which the principles of human nature compel them to exercise to their own profit and to the detriment of those not included within their peculiar class. It has no established Church, that is no system of opinions respecting the abstrusest questions which can be the topics of human thought, founded in an age of error and fanaticism, and opposed by law to all other opinions, defended by prosecutions, and sanctioned by enormous grants given to idle priests and forced from the unwilling hands of those who have an interest in the cultivation and improvement of the soil. It has no false representation, whose consequences are captivity, confiscation, infamy and ruin, but a true representation. The will of the many is represented in the assemblies and by the officers entrusted with the administration of the executive power almost as directly as the will of one person can be represented by the will of another. [This is not the place for dilating upon the inexpressible advantages (if such advantages require any manifestation) of a self-governing Society, or one which approaches it in the degree of the Republic of the United States.] Lastly, it has an institution by which it is honourably distinguished from all other governments which ever existed. It constitutionally acknowledges the progress of human improvement, and is framed under the limitation of the probability of more simple views of political science being rendered applicable to human life. There is a law by which the constitution is reserved for revision every ten years. Every other set of men who have assumed the office of legislation, and framing institutions for future ages, with far less right to such an assumption than the founders of the American Republic, *regarded* their work as the wisest and the best that could possibly have been produced: these illustrious men looked upon the past history of their species and saw that it was the history of his mistakes, and his sufferings arising from his mistakes; they observed the superiority of their own work to all the works which had preceded it, and they judged it possible that other political institutions would be discovered having the same relation to those which they had established which they bear to those which have preceded them. They provided therefore for the application of these contingent discoveries to the social state without the violence and misery attendant upon such change in less modest and more imperfect governments. The United States, as we would have expected from theoretical deduction, affords an example, compared with the old governments of Europe and Asia, of a free, happy, and strong people.1 Nor

let it be said 1 Its error consists not in the not representing the will of the people as it is, but in not providing for the full that they owe their superiority rather to the situation than to their government. Give them a king, and let that king waste in luxury, riot and bribery the same sum which now serves for the entire expenses of their government. Give them an aristocracy, and let that aristocracy legislate for the people. Give them a priesthood, and let them bribe with a tenth of the produce of the soil a certain set of men to say a certain set of words. Pledge the larger portion of them by financial subterfuges to pay the half of their property or earnings to another portion, and let the proportion of those who enjoy the fruits of the toil of others without toiling themselves be three instead of one. Give them a Court of Chancery and let the property, the liberty and the interest in the dearest concerns, the exercise of the sacred rights of a social being depend upon the will of one of the most servile creations of that kingly and oligarchical and priestly power to which every man, in proportion as development and the most salutary condition of that will. For two conditions are necessary to a theoretically perfect government, and one of them alone is adequately fulfilled by the most perfect of practical governments, the Republic of the United States: to represent the will of the people as it is. To provide that that will should be as wise and just as possible. In a certain extent the mere representation of public will produces in itself a wholesome condition of it, and in this extent America fulfils imperfectly and indirectly the last and most important condition of perfect govern* ment. — (AUTHOR'S NOTE.) he is of an enquiring and philosophic mind and of a sincere and honourable disposition is a natural and necessary enemy. Give then, as you must if you give them these things, a great standing army to cut down the people if they murmur. If any American should see these words, his blood would run cold at the imagination of such a change. He well knows that the prosperity and happiness of the United States if subjected to such institutions *would* be no more.

The — The just and successful Revolt of America Revolution.

French corresponded with a state of public opinion in Europe of which it was the first result. The French Revolution was the second. The oppressors of mankind had enjoyed (O that we could say suffered) a long and undisturbed reign in France, and to the pining famine, the shelterless destitution of the inhabitants of that country had been added and heaped up

insult harder to bear than misery. For the feudal system (the immediate causes and conditions of its institution having become obliterated) had degenerated into an instrument not only of oppression but of contumely, and both were unsparingly inflicted. Blind in the possession of strength, drunken as with the intoxication of ancestral greatness, the rulers perceived not that increase of knowledge in the subject which made its exercise insecure. They called soldiers to hew down the people when their power was already past. The tyrants were, as usual, the aggressors. The oppressed, having been rendered brutal, ignorant, servile and bloody by slavery, having had the intellectual thirst, excited in them by the progress of civilization, satiated from fountains of literature poisoned by the spirit and the form of monarchy, arose to take a dreadful revenge on their oppressors. Their desire to wreak revenge, to this extent, in itself a mistake, a crime, a calamity, arose from the same source as their other miseries and errors, and affords an additional proof of the necessity of that long-delayed change which it accompanied and disgraced. If a just and necessary revolution could have been accomplished with as little expense of happiness and order in a country governed by despotic as *in* one governed by free laws, equal liberty and justice would lose their chief recommendations and tyranny be divested of its most revolting attributes. Tyranny entrenches itself within the existing interests of the best and most refined citizens of a nation and says c If you dare trample upon these, be free \ Though these terrible conditions shall not be evaded, the world is no longer in a temper to decline the challenge.

The French were what their literature is (excepting Montaigne and Rousseau, and some few of the...) weak, superficial, vain, with little imagination, and with passions as well as judgements cleaving to the external forms of things. Not that *they* are organically different from the inhabitants of the nations who have become... or rather not that their organical differences, whatever they may amount to, incapacitate them from arriving at the exercise of the highest powers to be attained by man. Their institutions made them what they were. Slavery and superstition, contumely and the tame endurance of contumely, and the habits engendered from generation to generation out of this transmitted inheritance of wrong, created the thing which has extinguished what has been called the likeness of God in man. The Revolution in France overthrew the hierarchy, the aristocracy and the monarchy, and the whole of that peculiarly insolent and oppressive system on which they were based. But as it only partially

extinguished those passions which are the spirit of these forms a reaction took place which has restored in a certain limited degree the old system. In a degree, indeed, exceedingly limited, and stript of all its antient terrors, the hope of the Monarchy of France, with his teeth drawn and his claws pared, may *succeed in* maintaining the formal witness of most imperfect and insecure dominion.1 The usurpation of Bonaparte and 1 The foregoing sentence was left by Shelley in a chaotic and indecipherable condition. The restoration I have then the Restoration of the Bourbons were the shapes in which this reaction clothed itself, and the heart of every lover of liberty was struck as with palsy on the succession of these events. But reversing the proverbial expression of Shakespeare, it may be the good which the Revolutionists did lives after them, their ills are interred with their bones. But the military project of government of the great tyrant having failed, and there being even no attempt — and, if there were any attempt, there being not the remotest possibility of re-establishing the enormous system of tyranny abolished by the Revolution, France is, as it were, regenerated. Its legislative assemblies are in a certain limited degree representations of the popular will, and the executive power is hemmed in by jealous laws. France occupies in this respect the same situation as was occupied by England at the restoration of Charles II. It has undergone a revolution (unlike in the violence and calamities which attended it, because unlike in the abuses which it was excited to put down) which may be paralleled with that in our own country which ended in the death of Charles I. The authors of both Revolutions proposed a greater and more glorious object than the degraded passions of their countrymen permitted them attempted gives the sense intended, but is conjectural in some particulars. to attain. But in both cases abuses were abolished which never since have dared to show their face. There remains in the natural order of human things that the tyranny and perfidy of the reigns of Charles II and James II (for these were less the result of the disposition of particular men than the vices which would have been engendered in any but an extraordinary man by the natural necessities of their situation) perhaps under a milder form and within a shorter period should produce the institution of a Government in France which may bear the same relation to the state of political knowledge existing at the present day, as the Revolution under William III bore to the state of political knowledge existing at that period.

The Liberation of Germany.

Germany, which is, among the great nations of Europe, one of the latest civilized, with the exception of Russia, is rising with the fervour of a vigorous youth to the assertion of those rights for which it has that desire arising from knowledge, the surest pledge of victory. The deep passion and the bold and Aeschylean vigour of the imagery of their poetry, the enthusiasm, however distorted, the purity, truth and comprehensiveness of their religious sentiments, their language which is the manysided mirror of every changing thought, their sincere, bold and liberal spirit of criticism, their subtle and deep philosophy mingling fervid intuitions into truth with obscure error (for the period of just distinction is yet to come) and their taste and power in the plastic arts, prove that they are a great People. And every great nation either has *been* or is or will be free. The panic-stricken tyrants of that country promised to their subjects that their governments should be administered according to republican forms, they retaining merely the right of hereditary chief magistracy in their families. This promise, made in danger, the oppressors dream that they can break in security. And everything in consequence wears in Germany the aspect of rapidly maturing revolution.

In Spain and in the dependencies of Spain Despot-good and evil in the forms of Despair and ism in Tyranny are struggling face to face. That Spain* great people have been delivered bound hand and foot to be trampled upon and insulted by a traitorous and sanguinary tyrant, a monster who makes credible all that might have been doubted in the history of Nero, Christiern, Muley Ismael or Ezzelin1 — the persons who 1 ‘Christiem* is the king now commonly known as Christian II, perpetrator of the Massacre of Stockholm, 1520, and many other atrocities. Muley Ismael, who tortured one of his sons to death, was emperor of Morocco 1673-1727. Ezzelin or Eccelin de Romano, Lord of Padua in the thirteenth century, left a name which has become a byword for cruelty which struck even his own age with horror. — (ED.) have thus delivered them were that hypocritical knot of conspiring tyrants, who proceeded upon the credit they gained by putting down the only tyrant among them who was not a hypocrite, to undertake the administration of those *arrondissements*1 of consecrated injustice and violence which they deliver to those who the nearest resemble them under the name of the *c* kingdoms of the earth \ This action signed a sentence of death, confiscation, exile or captivity against every philosopher and patriot in Spain. The tyrant Ferdinand, he whose name is held a proverb of

execration, found natural allies in all the priests and military chiefs and a few of the most dishonourable of that devoted country. And the consequences of military despotism and the black, stagnant, venomous hatred which priests in common with eu nuchs seek every opportunity to wreak upon the portion of mankind exempt from their own unmanly disqualifications is slavery. And what is slavery — in its mildest form hideous, and, so long as one amiable or great attribute survives in its victims, rankling and intolerable, but in its darkest shape as it now exhibits itself in Spain it is the essence of all and more than all the evil for the sake of an exemption from which mankind submit to the mighty calamity of government. It is a system of insecurity of property, and of person, of prostration of conscience and understanding, it is famine heaped upon the greater number and contumely heaped upon all, defended by unspeakable tortures employed not merely as punishments but as precautions, by want, death and captivity, and the application to political purposes of the execrated and enormous instruments of religious cruelty. Those men of understanding, integrity, and courage who rescued their country from one tyrant are exiled from it by his successor and his enemy and their legitimate king. Tyrants, however they may squabble among themselves, have common friends and foes. The taxes are levied at the point of the sword. Armed insurgents occupy all the defensible mountains of the country. The dungeons are peopled thickly, and persons of every sex and age have the fibres of their frame torn by subtle torments. Boiling water (such is an article in the last news from Spain) is poured upon the legs of a noble Spanish lady newly delivered, slowly and cautiously, that she may confess what she knows of a conspiracy against the tyrant, and she dies, as constant as the slave Epicharis,1

1 — Tacitus tells her story (*Ann* xv. 57). She slew herself, fearing to reveal under renewed torture the names of her accomplices in a conspiracy against Nero:

More nobly dead, tho* but a freedwoman Than many a Roman swoln with pedigree. — (ED.) imprecating curses upon her torturers and passionately calling upon her children. These events, in the present condition of the understanding and sentiment of mankind, are the rapidly passing shadows, which forerun successful insurrection, the ominous comets of our republican poet perplexing great monarchs with fear of change. — Spain, having passed through an ordeal severe in proportion to

the wrongs and errors which it is kindled to erase must of necessity be renovated. Spain produced Calderon and Cervantes, what else did it but breathe, thro the tumult of the despotism and superstition which invested them, the prophecy of a glorious consummation?

The independents of South America are as South it were already free. Great Republics are America, about to consolidate themselves in a portion of the globe sufficiently vast and fertile to nourish more human beings than at present occupy, with the exception perhaps of China, the remainder of the inhabited earth. Some indefinite arrears of misery and blood remain to be paid to the Moloch of oppression. These, to the last drop and groan it will inflict by its *ministers*. But not the less are they inevitably enfranchised. The Great Monarchies of Asia cannot, let us confidently hope, remain unshaken by the earthquake which is shaking to dust the c mountainous strongholds' of the tyrants of the Western world.

Revolutions in the political and religious India, state of the Indian peninsula seem to be accomplishing, and it cannot be doubted but the zeal of the missionaries of what is called the Christian faith will produce beneficial innovation there, even by the application of dogmas and forms of what is here an outworn incumbrance. The Indians have been enslaved and cramped in the most severe and paralysing forms which were ever devised by man; some of this newenthusiasm ought to be kindled among them to consume it and leave them free, and even if the doctrines of Jesus do not penetrate through the darkness of that which those who profess to be his followers call Christianity, there will yet be a number of social forms modelled upon those European feelings from which it has taken its colour substituted to those according to which they are at present cramped, and from which, when the time for complete emancipation shall arrive, their disengagement may be less difficult, and under which their progress to it may be the less imperceptibly slow. Many native Indians have acquired, it is said, a competent knowledge in the arts and philosophy of Europe, and Locke and Hume and Rousseau are familiarly talked of in Brahminical society. But the thing to be sought is that they should, as they would if they were free, attain to a system of arts and literature of their own. — Of Persia we know little, but that it has been the theatre of sanguinary contests for power, and that it is now at peace. The Persians appear to be from organization1 a beautiful refined and impassioned people and would probably soon be infected by the contagion of good.

The Turkish Empire.

The Turkish Empire is in its last stage of ruin, and it cannot be doubted but that the time is approaching when the deserts of Asia Minor and of Greece will be colonized by the overflowing population of countries less enslaved and debased, and that the climate and the scenery which was the birthplace of all 1 — Across this passage is written the word *carets* indicating that something was to be supplied later. — (Ed.) that is wise and beautiful will not remain for ever the spoil of wild beasts and unlettered Tartars. — In Syria and Arabia the spirit of human intellect has roused a sect of people called Wahabees, who maintain the Unity of God, and the equality of man, and their enthusiasm must go on *c* conquering and to conquer' even if it must be repressed in its present shape. — Egypt having but a nominal dependence upon Constantinople is under the government of Ottoman Bey,1 a person of enlightened views who is introducing European literature and art, and is thus beginning that change which Time, the great innovator, will accomplish in that degraded country; and by the same means its sublime and enduring monuments may excite lofty emotions in the hearts of the posterity of those who now contemplate them without admiration. — The Jews, that wonderful people which has preserved so long the symbols of their union may réassumé their ancestral seats and...2

The West Indies.

Lastly, in the West Indian islands, first 1 — This person sent his nephew to Lucca to study European learning, when his nephew asked with reference to some branch of study at enmity with Mahometanism whether he was permitted to engage in it, he replied, 'You are at liberty to do anything which will not injure another \ — (AUTHOR'S NOTE.)

2 — The rest of this passage about the Jews is missing. — (ED.) from the disinterested yet necessarily cautious measures of the English Nation, and then from the infection of the spirit of Liberty in France, the deepest stain upon civilized man is fading away. Two nations of free negroes are already established; one, in pernicious mockery of the usurpation over France, an empire, the other a republic;1 both animating yet terrific spectacles to those who inherit around them the degradation of slavery and the spirit of dominion.

Such is a slight sketch of the general condition of the hopes and aspirations of the human race to which they have been conducted after the obliteration of the Greek republics by the successful tyranny of Rome, —

its internal liberty having been first abolished, — and by those miseries and superstitions consequent upon them, which compelled the human race to begin anew its difficult and obscure career of producing, according to the forms of society, the greatest portion of good.

The — Meanwhile England, the particular obj ect for Crisis in the sake of which these general considerations England kave been stated on the present occasion, has arrived, like the nations which surround it, at a crisis in its destiny.1 The literature of England, an energetic development of which has ever followed or preceded a great and free development of the national will, has arisen, as it were, from a new birth. In spite of that low-thoughted envy which would underrate, thro a fear of comparison with its own insignificance, the eminence of contemporary merit, it is felt by the British that this is in intellectual achievements a memorable age, and we live among such philosophers and poets as surpass beyond comparison any who have appeared in our nation since its last struggle for liberty. For the most unfailing hérald, or companion, or follower, of an universal employment of the sentiments of a nation to the production of a beneficial change is poetry, meaning by poetry an intense and impassioned power of communicating intense and impassioned impressions respecting man and nature. The persons in whom this power takes its abode may often, as far as regards many portions of their nature, have little correspondence with the spirit of good of which it is the minister. But although they may deny and abjure, they are yet compelled to serve that which is seated on the throne of their own soul.2 And what-

1 — The passage on contemporary English literature from this point to the end of the paragraph was used by Shelley with some verbal alterations in the conclusion of his essay, *A Defence of Poetry*. — (ED.)

2 — Across the page Shelley has here written the words, ever systems they may have professed by support, they actually advance the interests of Liberty.1 It is impossible to read the productions of our most celebrated writers, whatever may be their system relating to thought or expression, without being startled by the electric life which there is in their words. They measure the circumference or sound the depths of human nature with a comprehensive and all-penetrating spirit at which they are themselves perhaps most sincerely astonished, for it *is* less their own spirit than the spirit of their age. They are the priests of an unapprehended inspiration, the mirrors of gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the

words which express what they conceive not; the trumpet which sings to battle and feels not what it inspires; the influence which is moved not but moves. Poets and philosophers are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.

But, omitting these more abstracted considerations, has there not been and is there ‘In this sense Religion may be called Poetry; though distorted from the beautiful simplicity of its truth — Coleridge has said that every poet was religious, the converse, that every religious man must be a poet was more true \ — (ED.)

1 — At this point come the words, ‘Poets and philosophers are the unacknowledged legislators of the world \ Shelley afterwards closed the paragraph with this fine sentence, forgetting, however, to strike it out here. — (ED.) not in England a desire of change arising from the profound sentiment of the exceeding inefficiency of the existing institutions to provide for the physical and intellectual happiness of the people? It is proposed in this work (1) to state and examine the present condition of this desire, (2) to elucidate its causes and its object, (3) to show the practicability and utility, nay the necessity of change, (4) to examine the state of parties as regards it, and (5) to state the probable, the possible, and the desirable mode in which it should be accomplished.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE SENTIMENT OF THE NECESSITY OF CHANGE.

Two circumstances arrest the attention of those who turn their regard to the present political condition of the English nation — first, that there is an almost universal sentiment of the approach of some change to be wrought in the institutions of the government, and secondly, the necessity and the desirableness of such a change. From the first of these propositions, it being matter of fact, no person addressing the public can dissent. The latter, from a general belief in which the former flows and on which it depends, is matter of opinion, but *one* which to the mind of all, excepting those interested in maintaining the contrary is a doctrine so clearly established that even they, admitting that great abuses exist, are compelled to impugn it by insisting upon the specious topic, that popular violence, by which they alone could be remedied, would be more injurious than the continuance of those abuses. But as those who argue thus derive for the most part great advantage and convenience from the continuance of these abuses, their estimation of the mischief's of popular violence as compared with the mischiefs of tyrannical and fraudulent forms of government are likely, from the known principles of human nature, to be exaggerated. Such an estimate comes too with a worse grace from them, who if they would, in opposition to their own unjust advantage, take the lead in reform, might spare the nation from the inconveniences of the temporary dominion of the poor, who by means of that degraded condition which their insurrection would be designed to ameliorate, are sufficiently incapable of discerning their own glorious and permanent advantage, tho' surely less incapable than those whose interests consist in proposing to themselves an object perfectly opposite *to* and utterly incompatible with that advantage.1 These persons propose to us the dilemma of submitting to a despotism which is notoriously gathering like an avalanche year by year, or taking the risk of something which it must be confessed bears the aspect of revolution. To this alternative we are reduced by the selfishness of those who taunt us with it. And the history of the world teaches us not to hesitate an instant in the decision, if indeed the power of decision be not already past.

The establishment of King William III 1 The words ‘I meant the government party’ are here intercalated. — (ED.) on the throne of England has already been referred to as a compromise between liberty and despotism. The Parliament of which that event was the act had ceased to be in an emphatic sense a representation of the people. The Long Parliament was the organ of the will of all classes of people in England since it effected the complete revolution in a tyranny consecrated by time. But since its meeting and since its dissolution a great change had taken place in England. Feudal manners and institutions having become obliterated, monopolies and patents having been abolished, property and personal liberty having been rendered secure, the nation advanced rapidly towards the acquirement of the elements of national prosperity. Population increased, a greater number of hands were employed in the labours of agriculture and commerce, towns arose where villages had been, and the proportion borne by those whose labour produced the materials of subsistence and enjoyment to those who claim for themselves a superfluity of these materials began to increase indefinitely. A fourth class therefore made its appearance in the nation, the unrepresented multitude. Nor was it so much that villages which sent no members to Parliament became great cities, and that towns which had been considerable enough to send members dwindled from local circumstances into villages. This cause no doubt contributed to the general effect of rendering the Commons’ House a less complete representation of the people. Yet had this been all, though it had ceased to be a legal and actual it might still have been a virtual Representation of the People. But universally the nation became multiplied into a denomination *which* had no constitutional presence in the State. This denomination had not existed before, or had existed only to a degree in which its interests were sensibly interwoven with that of those who enjoyed a constitutional presence. Thus the proportion borne by the Englishmen who possessed the faculty of suffrage to those who were excluded from that faculty at the several periods of 1641 and 1688 had changed by the operation of these causes from 1 to 8 to 1 to 20. The rapid and effectual progress by which it changed from 1 to 20 to one to many hundreds in the interval between 1688 and 1819 is a process, to those familiar with the history of the political economy of that period, which is rendered by these principles sufficiently intelligible. The number therefore of those who have influence on the government, even if numerically the same as at the former period, was relatively different. And a

sufficiently just measure is afforded of the degree in which a country is enslaved or free, by the consideration of the relative number of individuals who are admitted to the exercise of political rights. Meanwhile another cause was operating of a deeper and more extensive nature. The *class* who compose the Lords must, by the advantages of their situation as the great landed proprietors, possess a considerable influence over nomination to the Commons. This influence, from an original imperfection in the equal distribution of suffrage, was always enormous, but it is only since it has been combined with the cause before stated that it has appeared to be fraught with consequences incompatible with public liberty. In 1641 this influence was almost wholly inoperative to pervert the counsels of the nation from its own advantage. But at that epoch the enormous tyranny of the agents of the royal power weighed equally upon all denominations of men, and united all counsels to extinguish it; add to which, the nation, as stated before, was in a very considerable degree fairly represented in Parliament. The common danger which was the Political Forces in Modern England. bond of union between the aristocracy and the people having been destroyed, the former systematized their influence through the permanence of hereditary right, whilst the latter were losing power by the inflexibility of the institutions which forbade a just accommodation to their numerical increase. After the operations of these causes had commenced, the accession of William III placed a seal upon forty years of Revolution.

The government of this country at the Monarchy period of 1688 was regal, tempered by aristo-and Aris-cracy, for what conditions of democracy attach tocracy-to an assembly one portion of which was imperfectly nominated by less than a twentieth part of the people, and another perfectly nominated by the nobles? For the nobility, having by the assistance of the people imposed close limitations upon the royal power, finding that power to be its natural ally and the people (for the people from the increase of their numbers acquired greater and more important rights whilst the organ through which those rights might be asserted grew feebler in proportion to the increase of the cause of those rights and of their importance) its natural enemy, made the Crown the mask and pretence of their own authority. At this period began that despotism of the oligarchy of party, which under colour of administering the executive power lodged in the king, represented in truth the interest of the rich. When it is said by political reasoners, speaking of the interval between 1688 and the present time, that the royal

power progressively increased, they use an expression which suggests a very imperfect and partial idea. The power which has increased is that entrusted with the administration of affairs, composed of men responsible to the aristocratical assemblies, or to the reigning party in those assemblies, which represents those orders of the nation which are privileged, and will retain power as long as it pleases them and must be divested of power as soon as it ceases to please them. The power which has increased therefore is the power of the rich. The name and office of king is merely the mask of this power, and is a kind of stalking-horse used to conceal these c catchers of men', whilst they lay their nets. Monarchy is only the string which ties the robber's bundle. Though less contumelious and abhorrent from the dignity of human nature than an absolute monarchy, an oligarchy of this nature exacts more of suffering from the people because it reigns both by the opinion generated by imposture, and the force which that opinion places within its grasp.

The National Debt.

At the epoch adverted to, the device of public credit was first systematically applied as an instrument of government. It was em-ployed at the accession of William III less as a resource for meeting the financial exigencies of the state than as a bond to connect those in the possession of property with those who had, by taking advantage of an accident of party, acceded to power. In the interval elapsed since that period it has accurately fulfilled the intention of its establishment, and has continued to add strength to the government even until the present crisis. Now this device is one of those execrable contrivances of misrule which overbalance the materials of common advantage produced by the progress of civilization and increase the number of those who are idle in proportion to those who work, whilst it increases, through the factitious wants of those indolent, privileged persons, the quantity of work to be done. The rich, no longer being able to rule by force, have invented this scheme that they may rule by fraud. The most despotic governments of antiquity were strangers to this invention, which is a compendious method of extorting from the people far more than praetorian guards, and arbitrary tribunals, and excise officers created judges in the last resort, would ever wring. Neither the Persian monarchy nor the Roman empire, where the will of one person was acknowledged as unappealable law, ever extorted a twentieth part the proportion now extorted from the property and labour Metallic of the inhabitants of Great

Britain. The Currency, precious metals have been from the earliest records of civilization employed as the signs of labour and the titles to an unequal distribution of its produce. The *Government of* a country is necessarily entrusted with the affixing to certain portions of these metals a stamp, by which to mark their genuineness; no other is considered as current coin, nor can be a legal tender. The reason of this is that no alloyed coin should pass current, and thereby depreciate the genuine, and by augmenting the price of the articles which are the produce of labour defraud the holders of that which is genuine of the advantages legally belonging to them. If the Government itself abuses the trust reposed in it to debase the coin, in order that it may derive advantage from the unlimited multiplication of the mark entitling the holder to command the labour and property of others, the gradations by which it sinks, as labour rises, to the level of their comparative values, produces public confusion and misery. The foreign exchange meanwhile instructs the Government how temporary was its resource. This mode of making the distribution of the sign of labour a source of private aggrandisement at the expense of 1 The words italicized were crossed out by Shelley, but as he did not supply anything to take their place I restore them. — (ED.) public confusion and loss was not wholly unknown to the nations of antiquity.

But the modern scheme of public credit is Mischiefs a far subtler and more complicated contrivance of Paper of misrule. All great transactions of personal Currency, property in England are managed by signs and that is by the authority of the possessor expressed upon paper, thus representing in a compendious form his right to so much gold, which represents his right to so much labour. A man may write on a piece of paper what he pleases; he may say he is worth a thousand when he is not worth a hundred pounds. If he can make others believe this, he has credit for the sum to which his name is attached. And so long as this credit lasts, he can enjoy all the advantages which would arise out of the actual possession of that sum he is believed to possess. He can lend two hundred to this man and three to that other, and his bills, among those who believe that he possesses this sum, pass like money.

Of course in the same proportion as bills of this sort, beyond the actual goods or gold and silver possessed by the drawer, pass current, they defraud those who have gold and silver and goods of the advantages legally attached to the possession of them, and they defraud the labourer and artizan of the

advantages attached to increasing the nominal price of labour, and such a participation in them as their industry *might* command, whilst they render wages fluctuating and add to the toil of the cultivator and manufacturer.

The existing government of England in substituting a currency of paper for one of gold has had no need to depreciate the currency by alloying the coin of the country; they have merely fabricated pieces of paper on which they promise to pay a certain sum. The holders of these papers came for payment in some representation of property universally exchangeable. They then declared that the persons who held the office for that payment could not be forced by law to pay. They declared subsequently that these pieces of paper were the current coin of the country. Of this nature are all such transactions of companies and banks as consist in the circulation of promissory notes to a greater amount than the actual property possessed by those whose names they bear. They have the effect of augmenting the prices of provision, and of benefiting at the expense of the community the speculators in this traffic. One of the vaunted effects of this system is to increase the national industry, that is, to increase the labours of the poor and those luxuries of the rich which they supply. To make a manufacturer work 16 hours when he only worked 8. To turn children into lifeless and 1 Artizan. bloodless machines at an age when otherwise they would be at play before the cottage doors of their parents. To augment indefinitely the proportion of those who enjoy the profit of the labour of others, as compared with those who exercise this labour. To screw up...x The consequences of this transaction have The New been the establishment of a new aristocracy, Aristo-which has its basis in funds as the old one *cracY*-has its basis in force. The hereditary landowners in England derived their title from royal grants — they are fiefs bestowed by conquerors, or church-lands. Long usage has consecrated the abstraction of the word aristocracy from its primitive meaning to that ordinary sense which signifies that class of persons who possess a right to the produce of the labour of others, without dedicating to the common service any labour in return.

This class of persons, whose existence is a prodigious anomaly in the social system, has ever constituted an inseparable portion of it, and there has never been an approach in practice towards any plan of political society modelled on equal justice, at least in the complicated mechanism of modern life. Mankind seem to acquiesce, as in a necessary condition of the imbecility of their own will and reason, in the existence of an aristocracy.

With reference to this imbecility, it has doubtless been the instrument of great social advantage, although that advantage would have been greater which might have been produced according to the forms of a just distribution of the goods and evils of life. The object therefore of all enlightened legislation, and administration, is to enclose within the narrowest practicable limits this order of drones. The effect of the financial impostures of the modern rulers of England has been to increase the number of the drones. Instead of one aristocracy, the condition *to* which, in the present state of human affairs, the friends of virtue and liberty are willing to subscribe as to an inevitable evil, they have supplied us with two aristocracies. The one, consisting in great land proprietors, and wealthy merchants who receive and interchange the produce of this country with the produce of other countries: in this, because all other great communities have as yet acquiesced in it, we acquiesce. Connected with the members of it is a certain generosity and refinement of manners and opinion which, although neither philosophy nor virtue, has been that acknowledged substitute for them which at least is a religion which makes respected those venerable names. The other aristocracy is one of attornies and excisemen and directors and government pensioners, usurers, stockjobbers, country bankers, with their dependents and descendants. These are a set of pelting wretches in whose employment there is nothing to exercise even to their distortion the more majestic faculties of the soul. Though at the bottom it is all trick, there is something frank and magnificent in the chivalrous disdain of infamy connected with a gentleman. There is something to which — until you see through the base falsehood upon which all inequality is founded — it is difficult for the imagination to refuse its respect, in the faithful and direct dealings of the substantial merchant. But in the habits and lives of this new aristocracy created out of an increase in public calamities, and whose existence must be determined by their termination, there is nothing to qualify our disapprobation. They eat and drink and sleep, and in the intervals of these things performed with most vexatious ceremony and accompaniments they cringe and lie. They poison the literature of the age in which they live by requiring either the antitype of their own mediocrity in books, or such stupid and distorted and inharmonious idealisms as alone have the power to stir their torpid imaginations. Their hopes and fears are of the narrowest description. Their domestic affections are feeble, and they have no others. They think of any commerce with their species but as a

means, never as an end, and as a means to the basest forms of personal advantage.

Labour, under the double aristocracy.

If this aristocracy had arisen from a false and depreciated currency to the exclusion of the other, its existence would have been a moral calamity and disgrace, but it would not have constituted an oppression. But the hereditary aristocracy who had the political administration of affairs took the measures which created this other for purposes peculiarly its own. Those measures were so contrived as in no manner to diminish the wealth and power of the contrivers. The lord does not spare himself one luxury, but the peasant and artizan are assured of many *necessary* 1 things. To support the system of are those who are the instruments of the fraud, and the merchants and the country gentlemen may be excused for believing that their existence is connected with the permanence of the best practicable forms of social order/ — (Ed.)

1 Shelley first wrote ‘assured of their necessities \ The social order according to its supposed unavoidable constitution, those from whose labour all those external accommodations which distinguish a civilized being from a savage arise, worked, before the institution of this double aristocracy, light hours. And of these only the healthy were compelled to labour, the efforts of the old, the sick and the immature being dispensed with, and they maintained by the labour of the sane, for such is the plain English of the poor-rates. That labour procured a competent share of the decencies of life, and society seemed to extend the benefits of its institution even to its most unvalued instrument. Although deprived of those resources of sentiment and knowledge which might have been their lot could the wisdom of the institutions of social forms have established a system of strict justice, yet they earned by their labour a competency in those external materials of life which, and not the loss of moral and intellectual excellence, is supposed to be the legitimate object of the desires and murmurs of the poor. Since the institution of this double aristocracy, however, they have often worked not ten but twenty hours a day. Not that the poor have rigidly worked twenty hours, but that the worth of the labour of twenty hours now, in food and last two words were then crossed out, and above them is written 4 many necessit things \ — (Ed.) clothing, is equivalent to the worth of ten hours then. And because twenty hours cannot, from the nature of the human frame, be exacted from those, who before performed ten, the aged and the

sickly are compelled either to work or starve. Children who were exempted from labour are put in requisition, and the vigorous promise of the coming generation blighted by premature exertion. For fourteen hours' labour, which they do perforce, they receive — no matter in what nominal amount — the price of seven. They eat less bread, wear worse clothes, are more ignorant, immoral, miserable and desperate. This then is the condition of the lowest and largest class, from whose labour the whole materials of life are wrought, of which the others are only the receivers or the consumers. They are more superstitious, for misery on earth begets a diseased expectation and panic-stricken faith in miseries beyond the grave c God they argue, c rules this world as well as that; and assuredly since his nature is immutable, and his powerful will unchangeable, he rules them by the same laws.' The gleams of hope which speak of Paradise seem like the flames in Milton's hell only to make darkness visible, and all things take their colour from what surrounds them. They become revengeful —

But the condition of all classes of society, excepting those within the privileged pale, TheUr-is singularly unprosperous, and even they gency °f experience the reaction of their own short-Reform* sighted tyranny in all those sufferings and deprivations which are not of a distinctly physical nature, in the loss of dignity, simplicity and energy, and in the possession of all those qualities which distinguish a slave-driver from a proprietor. Right government being an institution for the purpose of securing such a moderate degree of happiness to men as has been experimentally practicable, the sure character of misgovernment is misery, and first discontent and, if that be despised, then insurrection, as the legitimate expression of that misery. The public right to demand happiness is a principle of nature; the labouring classes, when they cannot get food for their labour, are impelled to take it by force. Laws and assemblies and courts of justice and delegated powers placed in balance and in opposition are the means and the form, but public happiness is the substance and the end of political institutions. Whenever this is attainted in a nation, not from external force, but from the internal arrangement and divisions of the common burthens of defence and maintenance, then there is oppression.

And then arises an alternative between Reform, or the institution of a military Despotism, or a Revolution in which parties, one striving after ill-digested systems of democracy, and the other clinging to the outworn abuses of power, leave the few who aspire to more than the former and who

would overthrow the latter at whatever expense, to wait *for1* that modified advantage which, with the temperance and the toleration which both regard as a crime, might have resulted from the occasion which they let pass in a far more signal manner.

The con-The propositions which are the consequences dition of or the corollaries of the preceding reasoning, England and to which it seems to have conducted us are: —

— That the majority of the people of England are destitute and miserable, ill-clothed, ill-fed, ill-educated.

— That they know this, and that they are impatient to procure a reform of the cause of this abject and wretched state.

— That the cause of this misery is the unequal distribution which, under the form of the national debt has been surreptitiously made of the products of their labour and the products of the labour of their ancestors; for all property is the produce of labour.

— That the cause of that cause is a defect in the government.

1 Shelley wrote * until ‘ instead of 5 for but finished his sentence confusedly without providing a verb for ‘advantage \ — (Ed.)

— That if they knew nothing of their condition, but believed that all they endured and all they were deprived of arose from the unavoidable conditions of human life, this belief being an error, and *one* the endurance of which enforces an injustice, every enlightened and honourable person, whatever may be the imagined interest of his peculiar class, ought to excite them to the discovery of the true state of the case, and to the temperate but irresistible vindication of their rights.

A Reform in England is most just and The Mal« necessary. What ought to be that reform? thusian A writer of the present day (a priest of Hacy course, for his doctrines are those of a eunuch and of a tyrant) has stated that the evils of the poor arise from an excess of population, and after they have been stript naked by the tax-gatherer and reduced to bread and tea and fourteen hours of hard labour by their masters, and after the frost has bitten their defenceless limbs, and the cramp has wrung like a disease within their bones, and hunger and the suppressed revenge of hunger has stamped the ferocity of want like the mark of Cain upon their countenance, that the last tie by which Nature holds them to the benignant earth whose plenty is garnered up in the strongholds of their tyrants, is to be divided; that the single alleviation of their sufferings and their scorns, the one thing which

made it impossible to degrade them below the beasts, which amid all their crimes and miseries yet separated a cynical and unmanly contamination, an anti-social cruelty, from all the soothing, elevating and harmonious gentleness of the sexual intercourse and the humanizing charities of domestic life which are its appendages — that this is to be obliterated. They are required to abstain from marrying under penalty of starvation. And it is threatened to deprive them of that property which is as strictly their birthright as a gentleman's land is his birthright, without giving them any compensation but the insulting advice to conquer, with minds undisciplined in the habits of higher gratification, a propensity which persons of the most consummate wisdom have been unable to resist, and which it is difficult to admire a person for having resisted. The doctrine of this writer is that the principle of population, when under no dominion of moral restraint, *is* outstripping the sustenance produced by the labour of man, and that not in proportion to the number of inhabitants, but operating equally in a thinly peopled community as in one where the population is enormous, being not a prevention but a check. So far a man might have been conducted by a train of reasoning which, though it may be shown to be defective, would argue in the reasoner no selfish or slavish feelings. But he has the hardened insolence to propose as a remedy that the poor should be compelled (for what except compulsion is a threat of the confiscation of those funds which by the institutions of their country had been set apart for their sustenance in sickness or destitution?) to abstain from sexual intercourse, while the rich are to be permitted to add as many mouths to consume the products of the labours of the poor as they please. [The rights of all men are intrinsically and originally equal and they forgo the assertion of all of them only that they may the more securely enjoy a portion.] If any new disadvantages are found to attach to the condition of social existence, those disadvantages ought not to be borne exclusively by one class of men, nor especially by that class whose ignorance leads them to exaggerate the advantages of sensual enjoyment, whose callous habits render domestic endearments more important to dispose them to resist the suggestion to violence and cruelty by which their situation ever exposes them to be tempted, and all whose other enjoyments are limited and few, whilst their sufferings are various and many. In this sense I cannot imagine how the advocates of equality could so readily have conceded that the unlimited operation of the principle of population affects the truth of these theories. On the contrary, the more

heavy and certain are the evils of life, the more injustice is there in casting the burden of them exclusively on one order in the community. They seem to have conceded it merely because their opponents have insolently assumed it. Surely it is enough that the rich should possess to the exclusion of the poor all other luxuries and comforts, and wisdom and refinement, the least envied but the most deserving of envy among all their privileges!

Preliminaries to Reform.

What is the Reform that we desire? Before we aspire after theoretical perfection in the amelioration of our political state, it is necessary that we possess those advantages which we have been cheated of, and *of* which the experience of modern times has proved that nations even under the present *conditions* are susceptible. We would regain these. We would establish some form of government which might secure us against such a series of events as have conducted us to a persuasion that the forms according to which it is now administered are inadequate to that purpose.

We would abolish the national debt.

We would disband the standing army.

We would, with every possible regard to the existing rights of the holders, abolish sinecures.

We would, with every possible regard to the existing interests of the holders, abolish tithes, and make all religions, all forms of opinion respecting the origin and government of the Universe, equal in the eye of the law.

We would make justice cheap, certain and speedy, and extend the institution of juries to every possible occasion of jurisprudence.

The national debt was contracted chiefly in Liquida-two liberticide wars, undertaken by the tion privileged classes of the country — the first for the ineffectual purpose of tyrannizing over j)ebt one portion of their subjects, the second, in order to extinguish the resolute spirit of obtaining their rights in another. The labour which this money represents, and that which is represented by the money wrung for purposes of the same detestable character out of the people since the commencement of the American war would, if properly employed, have covered our land with monuments of architecture exceeding the sumptuousness and the beauty of Egypt and Athens; it might have made every peasant’s cottage, surrounded with its garden, a little paradise of comfort,. with every convenience desirable in civilized life; neat tables and chairs, good beds, and a collection of useful

books; and our ships manned by sailors well-paid and well-clothed, might have kept watch round this glorious island against the less enlightened nations which assuredly would have envied, until they could have imitated, its prosperity. But the labour which is expressed by these sums has been diverted from these purposes of human happiness to the promotion of slavery, and that attempt at dominion, and a great portion of the sum in question is debt and must be paid. Is it to remain unpaid for ever, an eternal rent-charge upon the land from which the inhabitants of these islands draw their subsistence? This were to pronounce the perpetual institution of two orders of aristocracy, and men are in a temper to endure one with some reluctance. Is it to be paid now? If so what are the funds, or when and how is it to be paid? The fact is that the national debt is a debt not contracted by the whole nation towards a portion of it, but a debt contracted by the whole mass of the privileged classes towards one particular portion of those classes. If the principal were paid, the whole property of those who possess property must be valued and the public creditor, whose property would have been included in this estimate, satisfied out of the proceeds. It has been said that all the land in the nation is mortgaged for the amount of the national debt. This is a partial statement. Not only all the land in the nation, but all the property of whatever denomination, all the houses and the furniture and the goods and every article of merchandise, and the property which is represented by the very money lent by the fund-holder, who is bound to pay a certain portion as debtor whilst he is entitled to receive another certain portion as creditor. The property of the rich is mortgaged: to use the language of the law, let the mortgagee foreclose.

If the principal of this debt were paid,1 it would be the rich who alone could, and justly they ought to pay it. It would be a mere transfer among persons of property. Such a gentleman must lose a third of his estate, such a citizen a fourth of his money in the funds; the persons who borrowed would have paid, and the juggling and complicated system of paper finance be suddenly at an end. As it is, the interest is chiefly paid by those who had no hand in the borrowing, and who are 1 After due reductions had been made so as to make an equal value, taking corn for the standard, be given as was received. — (AUTHOR'S NOTE.) sufferers in other respects from the consequences of those transactions in which the money was spent.

The payment of the principal of what is called the national debt, which it is pretended is so difficult a problem, is only difficult to those who do not

see who is the debtor, and who the creditor, and who the wretched sufferers from whom they both wring the taxes which under the form of interest is given by the former and accepted by the latter. It is from the labour of those who have no property that all the persons who possess property think to extort the perpetual interest of a debt, the whole of which the latter know they could not persuade the former to pay, but by conspiring with them in an imposture which makes the third class pay what the first neither received by their sanction nor spent for their benefit and what the second never lent to them. They would both shift from themselves and their posterity to the labour of the present and of all succeeding generations the payment of the interest of their own debt, because the payment of the principal would be no more than a compromise and transfer of property between each other, by which the nation would be spared “ millions a year, which now is paid to maintain in luxury and indolence the public debtors and to protect them from the demand of their creditors upon them, who, being part of the same body, and owing as debtors whilst they possess a claim as creditors, agree to abstain from demanding the principal which they must all unite to pay, for the sake of receiving an enormous interest which is principally wrung out of those who had no concern whatever in the transaction. One of the first acts of a reformed government would undoubtedly be an effectual scheme for compelling these to compromise their debt between themselves.

When I speak of persons of property I mean not every man who possesses any right of property; I mean the rich. Every man whose scope in society has a plebeian and intelligible utility, whose personal exertions are more valuable to him than his capital; every tradesman who is not a monopolist, all surgeons and physicians, and artists, and farmers, all those persons whose profits spring from honourably and honestly exerting their own skill and wisdom or strength in greater abundance than from the employment ot money to take advantage of their fellow-citizens’ starvation for their profit, are those who pay, as well as those more obviously understood by the labouring classes, the interest of the national debt. It is the interest of all these persons as well as that of the poor to insist upon the payment of the principal.

For this purpose the form ought to be as simple and succinct as possible. The operations deciding who was to pay, at what time, and how much, and to whom, divested of financial chicanery, are problems readily to be

determined. The common tribunals may be invested with legal jurisdiction to award the proportion due upon the several claim of each.

Property Just and Unjust.

Labour and skill and the immediate wages of labour and skill is a property of the most sacred and indisputable right, and the foundation of all other property. And the right *of a man*1 to property in the exertion of his own bodily and mental faculties, or on the produce and free reward from and for that exertion is the most *inalienable of rights* x If however he takes by violence and appropriates to himself through fraudulent cunning, or receives from another property so acquired, his claim to that property is of a far inferior force. We may acquiesce, if we evidently perceive an 1 Struck out in MS. but no alternative phrases provided. — (Ed.) overbalance of public advantage in submission under this claim; but if any public emergency should arise, at which it might be necessary to satisfy, by a tax on capital, the claims of a part of the nation by a contribution from such national resources as may with the least injustice be appropriated to that purpose, assuredly it would not be on labour and skill, the foundation of all property, nor on the profits and savings of labour and skill, which are property itself, but on such possessions which can only be called property in a modified sense, as have from their magnitude and their nature an evident origin in violence or imposture.

Thus there are two descriptions of property which, ‘without entering into the subtleties of a more refined moral theory as applicable to the existing forms of society, are entitled to two very different measures of forbearance and regard. And this forbearance and regard have by political institutions usually been accorded by an inverse reason from what is just and natural. Labour, industry, economy, skill, genius, or any similar powers honourably and innocently exerted are the foundations of one description of property, and all true political institutions ought to defend every man in the exercise of his discretion with respect to property so acquired. Of this kind is the principal part of the property enjoyed by those who are but one degree removed from the class which subsists by daily labour. [Yet there are instances of persons in this class who have procured their property by fraudulent and violent means, as there are instances in the other of persons who have acquired their property by innocent or honourable exertion. All political science abounds with limitations and exceptions.] — Property thus acquired men leave to their children. Absolute right becomes weakened by

descent, just because it is only to avoid the greater evil of arbitrarily interfering with the discretion of every man in matters of property that the great evil of acknowledging any person to have an exclusive right to property who has not created it by his skill or labour is admitted, and secondly because the mode of its having been originally acquired is forgotten, and it is confounded with property acquired in a very different manner; and the principle upon which all property justly exists, after the great principle of the general advantage, becomes thus disregarded and misunderstood. Yet the privilege of disposing of property by will is one necessarily connected with the existing forms of domestic life; and exerted merely by those who having acquired property by industry or who preserve it by economy, would never produce any great and invidious inequality of fortune. A thousand accidents would perpetually tend to level the accidental elevation, and the signs of property would perpetually recur to those whose deserving skill might attract or whose labour might create it.

But there is another species of property which has its foundation in usurpation, or imposture, or violence, without which, by the nature of things, immense possessions of gold or land could never have been accumulated. Of this nature is the principal part of the property enjoyed by the aristocracy and by the great fundholders, the majority of whose ancestors never either deserved it by their skill and talents or acquired and created it by their personal labour. It could not be that they deserved it, for if the honourable exertion of the most glorious and imperial faculties of our nature had been the criterion of the possession of property the posterity of Shakespeare, of Milton, of Hampden, would be the wealthiest proprietors in England. It could not be that they acquired it by legitimate industry, for, besides that the real mode of acquisition is matter of history, no honourable profession or honest trade, nor the hereditary exercise of it, ever in such numerous instances accumulated so much as the masses of property enjoyed by the ruling orders in England. They were either grants from the Feudal sovereigns whose right to what they granted was founded upon conquest or oppression, both a denial of all right; or they were lands of the antient Catholic clergy which according to the most acknowledged principles of public justice reverted to the nation at their suppression, or they were the products of patents and monopolies, an exercise of sovereignty which it is astonishing that political theorists have not branded as the most pernicious and odious to the interests of a commercial nation;x or in later times such

property has been accumulated by dishonourable cunning and the taking advantage of a fictitious paper currency to obtain an unfair power over labour and the fruits of labour.

Property thus accumulated, being transmitted from father to son, acquires, as property of the more legitimate kind loses, force and sanction, but in a very limited manner. For not only on an examination and recurrence to first principles is it seen to have been founded on a violation of all that to which the latter owes its sacredness, but it is felt in its existence and perpetuation as a public burthen, and known as a rallying point to the ministers of tyranny, having the property of a snowball, gathering as it rolls, and rolling until it bursts.

The national debt, as has been stated, is The a debt contracted by a particular class in the nation towards a portion of that class. It is 0 e t# sufficiently clear that this debt was not contracted for the purpose of the public advantage.

Besides there was no authority in the nation competent to a measure of this nature. The usual vindication of national debts is that they are in an overwhelming measure contracted for the purpose of defence against a common danger, for the vindication of the rights and liberties of posterity, *and that* it is just that posterity should bear the burthen of payment. This reasoning is most fallacious.

The history of nations presents us with a succession of extraordinary emergencies, and thro their present imperfect organization their existence is perpetually threatened by new and unexpected combinations and developments of foreign or internal force. Imagine a situation of equal emergency to occur to England as that which the ruling party assume to have occurred as their excuse for burthening the nation with the perpetual payment of £45,000,000 annually. Suppose France, Russia, and Germany were to enter into a league against Britain, the one to avenge its injuries, the second to satisfy its ambition, the third to soothe its jealousy. Could the nation bear £90,000,000 of yearly interest? must there be twice as many luxurious and idle persons? must the labourer receive for 28 hours' work what he now receives for 14, what he once received for seven? But this argument1...

Reform or Revolution?

What is meant by a Reform of Parliament? If England were a Republic governed by one assembly; if there were no chamber of hereditary

aristocracy which is at once an actual and a virtual representation of all who attain through rank or wealth superiority over their countrymen; if there were no king who is as the rallying point of those whose tendency is at once to *gather*2 and to confer that power which is consolidated at the expense of the nation, then...

The advocates of universal suffrage have reasoned correctly that no individual who is governed can be denied a direct share in the government of his country without supreme injustice. If one pursues the train of reasonings which have conducted to this conclusion, we discover that systems of social order still more incompatible than universal suffrage with any reasonable hope of instant accomplishment appear to be that which should 1 — A blank page follows here. — (Ed.)

2 — The word ‘gather’ is struck out but nothing substituted for it. — (Ed.) result from a just combination of the elements of social life. I do not understand why those reasoners who propose at any price an immediate appeal to universal suffrage, because it is that which it is injustice to withhold, do not insist, on the same ground, on the immediate abolition, for instance, of monarchy and aristocracy, and the levelling of inordinate wealth, and an agrarian distribution, including the parks and chases of the rich, of the uncultivated districts of the country. No doubt the institution of universal suffrage would by necessary consequence immediately tend to the temporary abolition of these forms; because it is impossible that the people, having attained the power, should fail to see, what the demagogues now conceal from them, the legitimate consequence of the doctrines through which they had attained it. A Republic, however just in its principle and glorious in its object, would through the violence and sudden change which must attend it, incur a great risk of being as rapid in its decline as in its growth. It is better that they should be instructed in the whole truth; that they should see the clear grounds of their rights, the objects to which they ought to tend; and be impressed with the just persuasion that patience and reason and endurance *are the means of* a calm yet irresistible progress. A civil war, which might be engendered by the passions attending on this mode of reform, would confirm in the mass of the nation those military habits which have been already introduced by our tyrants, and with which liberty is incompatible. From the moment that a man is a soldier, he becomes a slave. He is taught obedience; his will is no longer, which is the most sacred prerogative of men, guided by his own judgement. He is taught

to despise human life and human suffering; this is the universal distinction of slaves. He is more degraded than a murderer; he is like the bloody knife which has stabbed and feels not: a murderer we may abhor and despise; a soldier, is by profession, beyond abhorrence and below contempt.

CHAPTER III.

PROBABLE MEANS.

THAT the House of Commons should The reform itself, uninfluenced by any fear that House of the people would, on their refusal, assume to!R°ns itself that office, seems a contradiction. What form> need of Reform if it expresses the will and watches over the interests of the public? And if, as is sufficiently evident, it despises that will and neglects that interest, what motives would incite it to institute a reform which the aspect of the times renders indeed sufficiently perilous, but without which there will speedily be no longer anything in England to distinguish it from the basest and most abject community of slaves that ever existed.

One motivex...

The great principle of Reform consists in Theory every individual giving his consent to the of Popular institution and the continuous existence of the ovem" social system which is instituted for his * advantage and for the advantage of others in his situation. As in a great nation this is practically impossible, masses of individuals consent to qualify other individuals, whom they delegate to superintend their concerns. These delegates have constitutional authority to exercise the functions of sovereignty; they unite in the highest degree the legislative and executive functions. A government that is founded on any other basis is a government of fraud or force and ought on the first convenient occasion to be overthrown. The first principle of political reform is the natural equality of men, not with relation to their property but to their rights. That equality in possessions which Jesus Christ so passionately taught is a moral rather than a political truth and is such as social institutions cannot without mischief inflexibly secure. Morals and politics can only be considered as portions of the same science, with relation to a system of such absolute perfection as Plato and Rousseau and other reasoners have asserted, and as Godwin has with irresistible eloquence systematised and developed. Equality in possessions must be the last result of the utmost refinements of civilization; it is one of the conditions of that system of society towards which, with whatever hope of ultimate success, it is our duty to tend. We may and ought to advert to it as to the elementary principle, as to the goal, unattainable, perhaps, by us but

which, as it were, we revive in our posterity to pursue. We derive tranquillity and courage and grandeur of soul from contemplating an object which is, because we will it, and may be, because we hope and desire it, and must be if succeeding generations of the enlightened sincerely and earnestly seek it.

But our present business is with the difficult and unbending realities of actual life, and when we have drawn inspiration from the great object of our hopes it becomes us with patience and resolution to apply ourselves to accommodating our theories to immediate practice.

That Representative Assembly called the The First House of Commons ought questionless to be Step to immediately nominated by the great mass of Reform* the people. The aristocracy and those who unite in their own persons the vast privileges conferred by the possession of inordinate wealth are sufficiently represented by the House of Peers and by the King. Those theorists who admire and would put into action the mechanism of what is called the British Constitution would acquiesce in this view of the question. For if the House of Peers be a permanent representation of the privileged classes, if the regal power be no more than another form, and a form still more advisedly to be *so* regarded, of the same representation, whilst the House of Commons is not chosen by the mass of the population, what becomes of that democratic element upon the presence of which it has been supposed that the waning superiority of England over the surrounding nations has depended?

Universal Any sudden attempt at universal suffrage Suffrage, would produce an immature attempt at a Republic. It is better that an object so inexpressibly great and sacred should never have been attempted than that it should be attempted and fail. It is no prejudice to the ultimate establishment of the boldest political innovations that we temporize so that when they shall be accomplished they may be rendered permanent.

Considering the population of Great Britain and Ireland as twenty millions and the representative assembly as five hundred, each member ought to be the expression of the will of 40,000 persons; of these two-thirds would consist of women and children and persons under age; the actual number of voters therefore for each member would be 13>333- The whole extent of the empire might be divided into five hundred electoral departments or parishes, and the inhabitants assemble on a certain day to exercise their rights of suffrage.

Mr. Bentham and other writers have Female urged the admission of females to the right Suffrage, of suffrage; this attempt seems somewhat immature. Should my opinion be the result of despondency, the writer of these pages would be the last to withhold his vote from any system which might tend to an equal and full development of the capacities of all living beings.

The system of voting by ballot which some Objec-reasoners have recommended is attended with tionstothe obvious inconveniences. It withdraws the Ballot* elector from the eye of his country, and his neighbours, and permits him to conceal the motives of his vote, which, if concealed, cannot but be dishonourable; when, if he had known that he had to render a public account of his conduct, he would never have permitted them to guide him. There is in this system of voting by ballot and of electing a member of the *Representative Assembly* as a churchwarden is elected something too mechanical. The elector and the elected ought to meet one another face to face, and interchange the meanings of actual presence and share some common impulses, and, in a degree, understand each other. There ought to be the common sympathy of the excitements of a popular assembly among the electors themselves. The imagination would thus be strongly excited and a mass of generous and enlarged and popular sentiments be awakened, which would give the vitality of...

That republican boldness of censuring and judging one another which has indeed existed in England under the title ofc public opinion', though perverted from its true uses into an instrument of prejudice and calumny, would then be applied to its genuine purpose. Year by year the people would become more susceptible of assuming forms of government more simple and beneficial.

It is in this publicity of the exercise of sovereignty that the difference between -the republics of Greece and the monarchies of Asia consisted.

The crisis of Monarchy.

If the existing government shall compel the nation to take the task of reform into its own hands, one of the most obvious consequences of such a circumstance would be the abolition of monarchy and aristocracy. Why, it will then be argued, if the subsisting condition of social forms is to be thrown into confusion, should these things be endured? Is it because we think that an hereditary king is cheaper and wiser than an elected President, or a House of Lords and a Bench of Bishops an institution modelled by the

wisdom of the most refined and civilized periods, beyond which the wit of mortal man can furnish nothing more perfect? In case the subsisting Government should compel the people to revolt to establish a representative assembly in defiance of them, and to assume in that assembly an attitude of resistance and defence, this question would probably be answered in a very summary manner. No friend of mankind and of his country can desire that such a crisis should suddenly arrive; but still less, once having arrived, can he hesitate under what banner to array his person and his power. At the peace, Europe would have been contented with strict economy and severe retrenchment, and some direct and intelligible plan for producing that equilibrium between the capitalists and the landholders which is derisively styled the payment of the national debt: had this system been adopted, they probably would have refrained from exacting Parliamentary Reform, the only secure guarantee that it would have been pursued. Two years ago it might still have been possible to have commenced a system of gradual reform. The people were then insulted, tempted and betrayed, and the petitions of a million of men rejected with disdain. Now they are more miserable, more hopeless, more impatient of their misery. Above all, they have become more universally aware of the true sources of their misery. It is possible that the period of conciliation is past, and that after having played with the confidence and cheated the expectations of the people, their passions will be too little under discipline to allow them to wait the slow, gradual and certain operation of such a Reform as we can imagine the constituted authorities to concede.

Gradual Reform.

Upon the issue of this question depends the species of reform which a philosophical mind should regard with approbation. If Reform shall be begun by this existing government, let us be contented with a limited beginning, with any whatsoever opening; let the rotten boroughs be disfranchised and their rights transferred to the unenfranchised cities and districts of the nation; it is no matter how slow, gradual and cautious be the change; we shall demand more and more with firmness and moderation, never anticipating but never deferring the moment of successful opposition, so that the people may become habituated to exercising the functions of sovereignty, in proportion as they acquire the possession of it. If this reform could begin from within the Houses of Parliament, as constituted at present, it appears to me that what is called moderate reform, that is a suffrage

whose qualification should be the possession of a certain small property, and triennial parliaments, would be a system in which for the sake of obtaining without bloodshed or confusion ulterior improvements of a more important character, all reformers ought to acquiesce. Not that such are first principles, or that they would produce a system of perfect social institutions or one approaching to *such.* But nothing is more idle than to reject a limited benefit because we cannot without great sacrifices obtain an unlimited one. We might thus reject a Representative Republic, if it were obtainable, on the plea that the imagination of man can conceive of something more absolutely perfect. Towards whatever we regard as perfect, undoubtedly it is no less our duty than it is our nature to press forward; this is the generous enthusiasm which accomplishes not indeed the consummation after which it aspires, but one which approaches it in a degree far nearer than if the whole powers had not been developed by a delusion. — It is in politics rather than in religion that faith is meritorious.

If the Houses of Parliament obstinately If Reform and perpetually refuse to concede any reform de" to the people, my vote is for universal suf-nied * * *' frage and equal representation. But, it is asked, how shall this be accomplished in defiance of and in opposition to the constituted authorities of the nation, they who possess whether with or without its consent the com-mand of a standing army and ofa legion of spies and police officers, and hold the strings of that complicated mechanism with which the hopes and fears of men are moved like puppets? They would disperse any assembly really chosen by the people, they would shoot and hew down any multitude, without regard to sex or age, as the Jews did the Canaanites, which might be collected in its defence, they would calumniate, imprison, starve, ruin and expatriate every person who wrote or acted or thought or might be suspected to think against them; misery and extermination would fill the country from one end to another.

This question I would answer by another.

Will you endure to pay the half of your earnings to maintain in luxury and idleness the confederation of your tyrants as the reward of a successful conspiracy to defraud and oppress you? Will you make your tame cowardice and the branding record of it the everlasting inheritance of your posterity? Not only this, but will you render by your torpid endurance this condition of things as permanent as the system of caste in India, by which the same horrible injustice is perpetrated under another form?

Assuredly no Englishmen by whom these propositions are understood will answer in the affirmative; and the opposite side of the alternative remains.

When the majority in any nation arrive at a conviction that it is their duty and their interest to divest the minority of a power employed to their disadvantage, and the minority are sufficiently mistaken as to believe that their superiority is tenable, a struggle must ensue.

If the majority are enlightened, united, impelled by a uniform enthusiasm and animated by a distinct and powerful appreciation of their object, and feel confidence in their undoubted power — the struggle is merely nominal. The minority perceive the approaches of the development of an irresistible force, by the influence of the public opinion of their weakness, on those political forms of which no government but an absolute despotism is devoid. They divest themselves of their usurped distinctions; the public tranquillity is not disturbed by the revolution.

But these conditions may only be imper-The fectly fulfilled by the state of a people grossly Organiza-oppressed and impotent to cast off the load.

Their enthusiasm may have been subdued by e orm* the killing weight of toil and suffering; they may be panic-stricken and disunited by their oppressors, and the demagogues, the influence of fraud may have been sufficient to weaken the union of classes which compose them by suggesting jealousies, and the position of the conspirators, although it is to be forced by repeated assaults, may be tenable until the siege can be vigorously urged. The true patriot will endeavour to enlighten and to unite the nation and animate it with enthusiasm and confidence. For this purpose he will be indefatigable in promulgating political truth. He will endeavour to rally round one standard the divided friends of liberty, and make them forget the subordinate objects with regard to which they differ by appealing to that respecting which they are all agreed. He will promote such open confederation among men of principle and spirit as may tend to make their intentions and their efforts converge to a common centre. He will discourage all secret associations, which have a tendency, by making the nation’s will develop itself in a partial and premature manner, to cause tumult and confusion. He will urge the necessity of exciting the people frequently to exercise their right of assembling, in such limited numbers as that all present may be actual parties to the proceedings of the day. Lastly, if circumstances had collected a considerable number as at Manchester 1 on

the memorable 16th of August, if the tyrants command the troops to fire upon them or cut them down unless they disperse, he will exhort them peaceably to defy the danger, and to expect without resistance the onset of the cavalry, and wait with folded arms the 1 — Referring to the *1* Peterloo*9* massacre of 1819. — (Ed.) event of the fire of the artillery and receive with unshrinking bosoms the bayonets of the charging battalions. Men are every day persuaded to incur greater perils for a less manifest advantage. And this, not because active resistance is not justifiable when all other means shall have failed, but because in this instance temperance and courage would produce greater advantages than the most decisive victory. In the first place, the soldiers are men and Englishmen, and it is not to be believed that they would massacre an unresisting multitude of their countrymen drawn up in unarmed array before them, and bearing in their looks the calm, deliberate resolution to perish rather than abandon the assertion of their rights. In the confusion of flight the ideas of the soldier become confused, and he massacres those who fly from him by the instinct of his trade. In the struggles of conflict and resistance he is irritated by a sense of his own danger, he is flattered by an apprehension of his own magnanimity in incurring it, he considers the blood of his countrymen at once the price of his valour, the pledge of his security. He applauds himself by reflecting that these base and dishonourable motives will gain him credit among his comrades and his officers who are animated by the same. But if he should observe neither resistance nor flight he would be M reduced to confusion and indecision. Thus far, his ideas were governed by the same law as those of a dog who chases a flock of sheep to the corner of a field, and keeps aloof when they make a parade of resistance. But the soldier is a man and an Englishman. This unexpected reception would probably throw him back upon a recollection of the true nature of the measures of which he was made the instrument, and the enemy might be converted into the ally.

The patriot will be foremost to publish the boldest truths in the most fearless manner, yet without the slightest tincture of personal malignity. He would encourage all others to the same efforts and assist them to the utmost of his power with the resources both of his intellect and fortune. He would call upon them to despise imprisonment and persecution and lose no opportunity of bringing public opinion and the power of the tyrants into circumstances of perpetual contest and oppo- sition.

The — All might however be ineffectual to proDanger of duce so uniform an impulse of the national Quietism as to preclude a further struggle. The strongest argument, perhaps, for the necessity of Reform, is the inoperative and unconscious abjectness to which the purposes of a considerable mass of the people are reduced. They neither know nor care — They are sink-ing into a resemblance with the Hindoos and the Chinese, who were once men as they are. Unless the cause which renders them passive subjects instead of active citizens be removed, they will sink with accelerated gradations into that barbaric and unnatural civilization which destroys all the differences among men. It is in vain to exhort us to wait until all men shall desire Freedom whose real interest will consist in its establishment. It is in vain to hope to enlighten them whilst their tyrants employ the utmost artifices of all their complicated engine to perpetuate the infection of every species of fanaticism and error from generation to generation. The advocates of Reform ought indeed to leave no effort unexerted, and they ought to be indefatigable in exciting all men to examine.

But if they wait until those neutral politicians whose opinions represent the actions of this class are persuaded that some effectual reform is necessary, the occasion will have passed or will never arrive, and the people will have exhausted their strength in ineffectual expectation and will have sunk into incurable supineness. It was principally the *effect of* a similar quietism that the populous and extensive nations of Asia have fallen into their existing decrepitude; and that anarchy, insecurity, ignorance and barbarism, the symptoms of the confirmed disease of monarchy, have reduced nations of the most delicate physical and intellectual organization and under the most fortunate climates of the globe to a blank in the history of man.

The Spectre of Anarchy.

The reasoners who *incline to* the opinion that it is not sufficient that the innovators should produce a majority in the nation, but that we ought to expect such an unanimity as would preclude anything amounting to a serious dispute, are prompted to this view of the question by the dread of anarchy and massacre. Infinite and inestimable calamities belong to oppression, but the most fatal of them all is that mine of unexploded mischief which it has practiced beneath the foundations of society, and with which, *c* pernicious to one touch' it threatens to involve the ruin of the

entire building together with its own. But delay merely renders this mischief more tremendous, not the less inevitable. For the utmost may now be the crisis of the social disease *which* is rendered thus periodical, chronic and incurable.1

The savage brutality of the populace is proportioned to the arbitrary character of their government, and tumults and insurrections soon, as in Constantinople, become consistent with the permanence of the causing evil, of which they might have been the critical determination.

The public opinion in England ought first Methods to be excited to action, and the durability of of Agita-those forms within which the oppressors en-tl0n* trench themselves brought perpetually to the test of its operation. No law or institution can last if this opinion be decisively pronounced against it. For this purpose government ought to be defied, in cases of questionable result, to prosecute for political libel. All questions relating to the jurisdiction of magistrates and courts of law respecting which any... Part incentive reed Provide, pernicious with one touch to fire referring to the artillery of the rebel angels. — (Ed.)

1 This sentence, which is interlined in the text, seems obscure in form, but the intention is clearly to represent the ‘crisis \ i e the explosion of the mischief, as better than a disease made chronic by delay in treatment. For the word ‘utmost’ Shelley first wrote ‘worst’. — (Ed.) doubt could be raised ought to be agitated with indefatigable pertinacity. Some two or three of the popular leaders have shown the best spirit in this respect; they only want system and co-operation. The taxgatherer ought to be compelled in every practicable instance to distrain, whilst the right to impose taxes, as was the case in the beginning of the resistance to the tyranny of Charles I is formally contested by an overwhelming multitude of defendants before the courts of common law. Confound the subtlety of lawyers with the subtlety of the law. The nation would thus be excited to develop itself, and to declare whether it acquiesced in the existing forms of government. The manner in which all questions of this nature might be decided would develop the occasions, and afford a prognostic as to the success, of more decisive measures. Simultaneously with this active and vigilant system of opposition, means ought to be taken of solemnly conveying the sense of large bodies and various denominations of the people in a manner the most explicit to the existing depositaries of power. Petitions, couched in the actual language of the petitioners, and emanating from distinct assemblies,

ought to load the tables of the House of Commons. The poets, philosophers and artists ought to remonstrate, and the memorials entided their petitions might shew the universal conviction they entertain of the inevitable connection between national prosperity and freedom, and the cultivation of the imagination and the cultivation of scientific truth, and the profound development of moral and metaphysical enquiry. Suppose the memorials to be severally written by Godwin, Hazlitt and Bentham and Hunt, they would be worthy of the age and of the cause; radiant and irresistible like the meridian sun they would strike all but the eagles who dared to gaze upon its beams with blindness and confusion. These appeals of solemn and emphatic argument from those who have already a predestined existence among posterity, would appal the enemies of mankind by their echoes from every corner of the world in which the majestic literature of England is cultivated; it would be like a voice from beyond the dead of those who will live in the memories of men, when they must be forgotten; it would be Eternity warning Time.

Let us hope that at this stage of the progress of Reform, the oppressors would feel their impotence and reluctantly and imperfectly concede some limited portion of the rights of the people, and disgorge some morsels of their undigested prey. In this case, the people ought to be exhorted by everything ultimately dear to them to pause until by the exercise of those rights which they have regained they become fitted to demand more. It is better that we gain what we demand by a process of négociation which should occupy twenty years than that by communicating a sudden shock to the interests of those who are the depositaries and dependents of power we should incur the calamity which their revenge might inflict upon us by giving the signal of civil war. If, after all, they consider the chance of personal ruin, and the infamy of figuring on the page of history as the promoters of civil war preferable to resigning any portion how small soever of their usurped authority, we are to recollect that we possess a right beyond remonstrance. It has been acknowledged by the most approved writers on the English constitution, which has in this instance *been* merely *a* declaration of the superior decisions of eternal justice, that we possess a right of resistance. The claim of the reigning family is founded upon a memorable exertion of this solemnly recorded right

Insurrection.

The last resort of resistance is undoubtedly insurrection. The right of insurrection is derived from the employment of armed force to counteract the will of the nation. Let the government disband the standing army, and the purpose of resistance would be sufficiently fulfilled by the incessant agitation of the points of dispute before the courts of common law, and by an unwarlike display of the irresistible number and union of the people.

Before we enter into a consideration of the measures which might terminate in civil war, let us for a moment consider the nature and the consequences of war. This is the alternative which the unprincipled cunning of the tyrants has presented to us, and which we must not shun. There is secret sympathy between Destruction and Power, between Monarchy and War; and the long experience of all the history of all recorded time teaches us with what success they have played into each other's hands. War is a kind of superstition; the pageantry of arms and badges corrupts the imagination of men. How far more appropriate would be the symbols of an inconsolable grief — muffled drums, and melancholy music, and arms reversed, and the livery of sorrow rather than of blood. When men mourn at funerals for what do they mourn in comparison with the calamities which they hasten with every circumstance of festivity to suffer and to inflict! Visit in imagination the scene of a field of battle or a city taken by assault, collect into one group the groans and the distortions of the innumerable dying, the inconsolable grief and horror of their surviving friends, the hellish exultation and unnatural drunkenness of destruction of N the conquerors, the burning of the harvests and the obliteration of the traces of cultivation — to this, in a civil war, is to be added the sudden disruption of the bonds of social life, and *i* father against son \

If there had never been war, there could never have been tyranny in the world; tyrants take advantage or the mechanical organization of armies to establish and defend their encroachments. It is thus that the mighty advantages of the French Revolution have been almost compensated by a succession of tyrants (for demagogues, oligarchies, usurpers and legitimate kings are merely varieties of the same class) from Robespierre to Louis XVIII. War, waged from whatever motive, extinguishes the sentiment of reason and justice in the mind. The motive is forgotten, or only adverted to in a mechanical and habitual manner. A sentiment of confidence in brute force and in a contempt of death and danger is considered the highest virtue, when in truth, and however indispensable, they are merely the means and

the instrument, highly capable of being perverted to destroy the cause they were assumed to promote. It is a foppery the most intolerable to an amiable and philosophical mind. It is like what some reasoners have observed of religious faith; no fallacious and indirect motive to action can subsist in the mind without weakening the effect of those which are genuine and true.

The person who thinks it virtuous to believe, will think a less degree of virtue attaches to good actions than if he had considered it as indifferent. The person who has been accustomed to subdue men by force will be less inclined to the trouble of convincing or persuading them.

These brief considerations suffice to show that the true friend of mankind and of his country would hesitate before he recommended measures which tend to bring down so heavy a calamity as war.

I imagine however that before the English Nation shall arrive at that point of moral and political degradation now occupied by the Chinese, it will be necessary to appeal to an exertion of physical strength. If the madness of parties admits no other mode of determining the question at issue,1...

When the people shall have obtained, by After the whatever means, the victory over their op-Victory, pressors and when persons appointed by them shall have taken their seats in the Representative Assembly of the nation, and assumed the control of public aflùirs according to constitutional rules, there will remain the great task of accommodating all that can be preserved 1 Two blank pages follow this unfinished sentence. -(ED.) of antient forms with the improvements of the knowledge of a more enlightened age, in legislation, jurisprudence, government and religious and academical institutions. The settlement of the national debt is on the principles before elucidated merely *an* arrangement of form, and however necessary and important is an affair of mere arithmetical proportions readily determined; nor can I see how those who, being deprived of their unjust advantages, will probably inwardly murmur, can oppose one word of open expostulation to a measure of such irrefragable justice.

There is one thing which certain vulgar agitators endeavour to flatter the most uneducated part of the people by assiduously proposing, which they ought not to do nor to require; and that is Retribution. Men having been injured, desire to injure in return. This is falsely called an universal law of human nature; it is a law from which many are exempt, and all in proportion to their virtue and cultivation. The savage is more revengeful

than the civilized man, the ignorant and uneducated than the person of a refined and cultivated intellect; the generous and...

END OF MS.

ON THE SYMPOSIUM, OR PREFACE TO THE BANQUET OF PLATO

A FRAGMENT

The dialogue entitled The Banquet was selected by the translator as the most beautiful and perfect among all the works of Plato. [Footnote: The Republic, though replete with considerable errors of speculation, is, indeed, the greatest repository of important truths of all the works of Plato. This, perhaps, is because it is the longest. He first, and perhaps last, maintained that a state ought to be governed, not by the wealthiest, or the most ambitious, or the most cunning, but by the wisest; the method of selecting such rulers, and the laws by which such a selection is made, must correspond with and arise out of the moral freedom and refinement of the people.] He despairs of having communicated to the English language any portion of the surpassing graces of the composition, or having done more than present an imperfect shadow of the language and the sentiment of this astonishing production.

Plato is eminently the greatest among the Greek philosophers, and from, or, rather, perhaps through him, his master Socrates, have proceeded those emanations of moral and metaphysical knowledge, on which a long series and an incalculable variety of popular superstitions have sheltered their absurdities from the slow contempt of mankind. Plato exhibits the rare union of close and subtle logic with the Pythian enthusiasm of poetry, melted by the splendour and harmony of his periods into one irresistible stream of musical impressions, which hurry the persuasions onward, as in a breathless career. His language is that of an immortal spirit, rather than a man. Lord Bacon is, perhaps, the only writer, who, in these particulars, can be compared with him: his imitator, Cicero, sinks in the comparison into an ape mocking the gestures of a man. His views into the nature of mind and existence are often obscure, only because they are profound; and though his theories respecting the government of the world, and the elementary laws of moral action, are not always correct, yet there is scarcely any of his treatises which do not, however stained by puerile sophisms, contain the most remarkable intuitions into all that can be the subject of the human mind. His excellence consists especially in intuition, and it is this faculty which raises

him far above Aristotle, whose genius, though vivid and various, is obscure in comparison with that of Plato.

The dialogue entitled the Banquet, is called [word in Greek], or a Discussion upon Love, and is supposed to have taken place at the house of Agathon, at one of a series of festivals given by that poet, on the occasion of his gaining the prize of tragedy at the Dionysiaca. The account of the debate on this occasion is supposed to have been given by Apollodorus, a pupil of Socrates, many years after it had taken place, to a companion who was curious to hear it. This Apollodorus appears, both from the style in which he is represented in this piece, as well as from a passage in the Phaedon, to have been a person of an impassioned and enthusiastic disposition; to borrow an image from the Italian painters, he seems to have been the St. John of the Socratic group. The drama (for so the lively distinction of character and the various and well-wrought circumstances of the story almost entitle it to be called) begins by Socrates persuading Aristodemus to sup at Agathon's, uninvited. The whole of this introduction affords the most lively conception of refined Athenian manners.

[1818; publ. 1840] [UNFINISHED]

A DEFENCE OF POETRY

PART I

According to one mode of regarding those two classes of mental action, which are called reason and imagination, the former may be considered as mind contemplating the relations borne by one thought to another, however produced; and the latter, as mind acting upon those thoughts so as to colour them with its own light, and composing from them, as from elements, other thoughts, each containing within itself the principle of its own integrity. The one is the [word in Greek], or the principle of synthesis, and has for its objects those forms which are common to universal nature and existence itself; the other is the [word in Greek], or principle of analysis, and its action regards the relations of things, simply as relations; considering thoughts, not in their integral unity, but as the algebraical representations which conduct to certain general results. Reason is the enumeration of quantities already known; imagination is the perception of the value of those quantities, both separately and as a whole. Reason respects the differences, and imagination the similitudes of things. Reason is to the imagination as the instrument to the agent, as the body to the spirit, as the shadow to the substance.

Poetry, in a general sense, may be defined to be ‘the expression of the imagination’: and poetry is connate with the origin of man. Man is an instrument over which a series of external and internal impressions are driven, like the alternations of an ever-changing wind over an Aeolian lyre, which move it by their motion to ever-changing melody. But there is a principle within the human being, and perhaps within all sentient beings, which acts otherwise than in the lyre, and produces not melody alone, but harmony, by an internal adjustment of the sounds or motions thus excited to the impressions which excite them. It is as if the lyre could accommodate its chords to the motions of that which strikes them, in a determined proportion of sound; even as the musician can accommodate his voice to the sound of the lyre. A child at play by itself will express its delight by its voice and motions; and every inflexion of tone and every gesture will bear exact relation to a corresponding antitype in the pleasurable impressions which awakened it; it will be the reflected image of that impression; and as the

lyre trembles and sounds after the wind has died away, so the child seeks, by prolonging in its voice and motions the duration of the effect, to prolong also a consciousness of the cause. In relation to the objects which delight a child, these expressions are, what poetry is to higher objects. The savage (for the savage is to ages what the child is to years) expresses the emotions produced in him by surrounding objects in a similar manner; and language and gesture, together with plastic or pictorial imitation, become the image of the combined effect of those objects, and of his apprehension of them. Man in society, with all his passions and his pleasures, next becomes the object of the passions and pleasures of man; an additional class of emotions produces an augmented treasure of expressions; and language, gesture, and the imitative arts, become at once the representation and the medium, the pencil and the picture, the chisel and the statue, the chord and the harmony. The social sympathies, or those laws from which, as from its elements, society results, begin to develop themselves from the moment that two human beings coexist; the future is contained within the present, as the plant within the seed; and equality, diversity, unity, contrast, mutual dependence, become the principles alone capable of affording the motives according to which the will of a social being is determined to action, inasmuch as he is social; and constitute pleasure in sensation, virtue in sentiment, beauty in art, truth in reasoning, and love in the intercourse of kind. Hence men, even in the infancy of society, observe a certain order in their words and actions, distinct from that of the objects and the impressions represented by them, all expression being subject to the laws of that from which it proceeds. But let us dismiss those more general considerations which might involve an inquiry into the principles of society itself, and restrict our view to the manner in which the imagination is expressed upon its forms.

In the youth of the world, men dance and sing and imitate natural objects, observing in these actions, as in all others, a certain rhythm or order. And, although all men observe a similar, they observe not the same order, in the motions of the dance, in the melody of the song, in the combinations of language, in the series of their imitations of natural objects. For there is a certain order or rhythm belonging to each of these classes of mimetic representation, from which the hearer and the spectator receive an intenser and purer pleasure than from any other: the sense of an approximation to this order has been called taste by modern writers. Every

man in the infancy of art observes an order which approximates more or less closely to that from which this highest delight results: but the diversity is not sufficiently marked, as that its gradations should be sensible, except in those instances where the predominance of this faculty of approximation to the beautiful (for so we may be permitted to name the relation between this highest pleasure and its cause) is very great. Those in whom it exists in excess are poets, in the most universal sense of the word; and the pleasure resulting from the manner in which they express the influence of society or nature upon their own minds, communicates itself to others, and gathers a sort or reduplication from that community. Their language is vitally metaphorical; that is, it marks the before unapprehended relations of things and perpetuates their apprehension, until the words which represent them become, through time, signs for portions or classes of thoughts instead of pictures of integral thoughts; and then if no new poets should arise to create afresh the associations which have been thus disorganized, language will be dead to all the nobler purposes of human intercourse. These similitudes or relations are finely said by Lord Bacon to be ‘the same footsteps of nature impressed upon the various subjects of the world’; [Footnote: De Augment. Scient., cap. i, lib. iii.] and he considers the faculty which perceives them as the storehouse of axioms common to all knowledge. In the infancy of society every author is necessarily a poet, because language itself is poetry; and to be a poet is to apprehend the true and the beautiful, in a word, the good which exists in the relation, subsisting, first between existence and perception, and secondly between perception and expression. Every original language near to its source is in itself the chaos of a cyclic poem: the copiousness of lexicography and the distinctions of grammar are the works of a later age, and are merely the catalogue and the form of the creations of poetry.

But poets, or those who imagine and express this indestructible order, are not only the authors of language and of music, of the dance, and architecture, and statuary, and painting; they are the institutors of laws, and the founders of civil society, and the inventors of the arts of life, and the teachers, who draw into a certain propinquity with the beautiful and the true, that partial apprehension of the agencies of the invisible world which is called religion. Hence all original religions are allegorical, or susceptible of allegory, and, like Janus, have a double face of false and true. Poets, according to the circumstances of the age and nation in which they

appeared, were called, in the earlier epochs of the world, legislators, or prophets: a poet essentially comprises and unites both these characters. For he not only beholds intensely the present as it is, and discovers those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered, but he beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germs of the flower and the fruit of latest time. Not that I assert poets to be prophets in the gross sense of the word, or that they can foretell the form as surely as they foreknow the spirit of events: such is the pretence of superstition, which would make poetry an attribute of prophecy, rather than prophecy an attribute of poetry. A poet participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one; as far as relates to his conceptions, time and place and number are not. The grammatical forms which express the moods of time, and the difference of persons, and the distinction of place, are convertible with respect to the highest poetry without injuring it as poetry; and the choruses of Aeschylus, and the book of Job, and Dante's Paradise, would afford, more than any other writings, examples of this fact, if the limits of this essay did not forbid citation. The creations of sculpture, painting, and music, are illustrations still more decisive.

Language, colour, form, and religious and civil habits of action, are all the instruments and materials of poetry; they may be called poetry by that figure of speech which considers the effect as a synonym of the cause. But poetry in a more restricted sense expresses those arrangements of language, and especially metrical language, which are created by that imperial faculty; whose throne is curtained within the invisible nature of man. And this springs from the nature itself of language, which is a more direct representation of the actions and passions of our internal being, and is susceptible of more various and delicate combinations, than colour, form, or motion, and is more plastic and obedient to the control of that faculty of which it is the creation. For language is arbitrarily produced by the imagination and has relation to thoughts alone; but all other materials, instruments and conditions of art, have relations among each other, which limit and interpose between conception and expression The former is as a mirror which reflects, the latter as a cloud which enfeebles, the light of which both are mediums of communication. Hence the fame of sculptors, painters, and musicians, although the intrinsic powers of the great masters of these arts may yield in no degree to that of those who have employed language as the hieroglyphic of their thoughts, has never equalled that of

poets in the restricted sense of the term, as two performers of equal skill will produce unequal effects from a guitar and a harp. The fame of legislators and founders of religions, so long as their institutions last, alone seems to exceed that of poets in the restricted sense; but it can scarcely be a question, whether, if we deduct the celebrity which their flattery of the gross opinions of the vulgar usually conciliates, together with that which belonged to them in their higher character of poets, any excess will remain.

We have thus circumscribed the word poetry within the limits of that art which is the most familiar and the most perfect expression of the faculty itself. It is necessary, however, to make the circle still narrower, and to determine the distinction between measured and unmeasured language; for the popular division into prose and verse is inadmissible in accurate philosophy.

Sounds as well as thoughts have relation both between each other and towards that which they represent, and a perception of the order of those relations has always been found connected with a perception of the order of the relations of thoughts. Hence the language of poets has ever affected a certain uniform and harmonious recurrence of sound, without which it were not poetry, and which is scarcely less indispensable to the communication of its influence, than the words themselves, without reference to that peculiar order. Hence the vanity of translation; it were as wise to cast a violet into a crucible that you might discover the formal principle of its colour and odour, as seek to transfuse from one language into another the creations of a poet. The plant must spring again from its seed, or it will bear no flower — and this is the burthen of the curse of Babel.

An observation of the regular mode of the recurrence of harmony in the language of poetical minds, together with its relation to music, produced metre, or a certain system of traditional forms of harmony and language. Yet it is by no means essential that a poet should accommodate his language to this traditional form, so that the harmony, which is its spirit, be observed. The practice is indeed convenient and popular, and to be preferred, especially in such composition as includes much action: but every great poet must inevitably innovate upon the example of his predecessors in the exact structure of his peculiar versification. The distinction between poets and prose writers is a vulgar error. The distinction between philosophers and poets has been anticipated. Plato was essentially a poet — the truth and splendour of his imagery, and the melody of his language, are the most

intense that it is possible to conceive. He rejected the measure of the epic, dramatic, and lyrical forms, because he sought to kindle a harmony in thoughts divested of shape and action, and he forbore to invent any regular plan of rhythm which would include, under determinate forms, the varied pauses of his style. Cicero sought to imitate the cadence of his periods, but with little success. Lord Bacon was a poet. [Footnote: See the Filum Labyrinthi, and the Essay on Death particularly]. His language has a sweet and majestic rhythm, which satisfies the sense, no less than the almost superhuman wisdom of his philosophy satisfies the intellect; it is a strain which distends, and then bursts the circumference of the reader's mind, and pours itself forth together with it into the universal element with which it has perpetual sympathy. All the authors of revolutions in opinion are not only necessarily poets as they are inventors, nor even as their words unveil the permanent analogy of things by images which participate in the life of truth; but as their periods are harmonious and rhythmical, and contain in themselves the elements of verse; being the echo of the eternal music. Nor are those supreme poets, who have employed traditional forms of rhythm on account of the form and action of their subjects, less capable of perceiving and teaching the truth of things, than those who have omitted that form. Shakespeare, Dante, and Milton (to confine ourselves to modern writers) are philosophers of the very loftiest power.

A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth. There is this difference between a story and a poem, that a story is a catalogue of detached facts, which have no other connexion than time, place, circumstance, cause and effect; the other is the creation of actions according to the unchangeable forms of human nature, as existing in the mind of the Creator, which is itself the image of all other minds. The one is partial, and applies only to a definite period of time, and a certain combination of events which can never again recur; the other is universal, and contains within itself the germ of a relation to whatever motives or actions have place in the possible varieties of human nature. Time, which destroys the beauty and the use of the story of particular facts, stripped of the poetry which should invest them, augments that of poetry, and for ever develops new and wonderful applications of the eternal truth which it contains. Hence epitomes have been called the moths of just history; they eat out the poetry of it. A story of particular facts is as a mirror which obscures and distorts

that which should be beautiful: poetry is a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted.

The parts of a composition may be poetical, without the composition as a whole being a poem. A single sentence may be a considered as a whole, though it may be found in the midst of a series of unassimilated portions: a single word even may be a spark of inextinguishable thought. And thus all the great historians, Herodotus, Plutarch, Livy, were poets; and although, the plan of these writers, especially that of Livy, restrained them; from developing this faculty in its highest degree, they made copious and ample amends for their subjection, by filling all the interstices of their subjects with living images.

Having determined what is poetry, and who are poets, let us proceed to estimate its effects upon society.

Poetry is ever accompanied with pleasure: all spirits on which it falls open themselves to receive the wisdom which is mingled with its delight. In the infancy of the world, neither poets themselves nor their auditors are fully aware of the excellence of poetry: for it acts in a divine and unapprehended manner, beyond and above consciousness; and it is reserved for future generations to contemplate and measure the mighty cause and effect in all the strength and splendour of their union. Even in modern times, no living poet ever arrived at the fullness of his fame; the jury which sits in judgement upon a poet, belonging as he does to all time, must be composed of his peers: it must be impanelled by Time from the selectest of the wise of many generations. A poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds; his auditors are as men entranced by the melody of an unseen musician, who feel that they are moved and softened, yet know not whence or why. The poems of Homer and his contemporaries were the delight of infant Greece; they were the elements of that social system which is the column upon which all succeeding civilization has reposed. Homer embodied the ideal perfection of his age in human character; nor can we doubt that those who read his verses were awakened to an ambition of becoming like to Achilles, Hector, and Ulysses the truth and beauty of friendship, patriotism, and persevering devotion to an object, were unveiled to the depths in these immortal creations: the sentiments of the auditors must have been refined and enlarged by a sympathy with such great and lovely impersonations, until from admiring they imitated, and from imitation they identified themselves

with the objects of their admiration. Nor let it be objected, that these characters are remote from moral perfection, and that they can by no means be considered as edifying patterns for general imitation. Every epoch, under names more or less specious, has deified its peculiar errors; Revenge is the naked idol of the worship of a semi-barbarous age; and Self-deceit is the veiled image of unknown evil, before which luxury and satiety lie prostrate. But a poet considers the vices of his contemporaries as a temporary dress in which his creations must be arrayed, and which cover without concealing the eternal proportions of their beauty. An epic or dramatic personage is understood to wear them around his soul, as he may the ancient armour or the modern uniform around his body; whilst it is easy to conceive a dress more graceful than either. The beauty of the internal nature cannot be so far concealed by its accidental vesture, but that the spirit of its form shall communicate itself to the very disguise, and indicate the shape it hides from the manner in which it is worn. A majestic form and graceful motions will express themselves through the most barbarous and tasteless costume. Few poets of the highest class have chosen to exhibit the beauty of their conceptions in its naked truth and splendour; and it is doubtful whether the alloy of costume, habit, &c., be not necessary to temper this planetary music for mortal ears.

The whole objection, however, of the immorality of poetry rests upon a misconception of the manner in which poetry acts to produce the moral improvement of man. Ethical science arranges the elements which poetry has created, and propounds schemes and proposes examples of civil and domestic life: nor is it for want of admirable doctrines that men hate, and despise, and censure, and deceive, and subjugate one another. But poetry acts in another and diviner manner. It awakens and enlarges the mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought. Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar; it reproduces all that it represents, and the impersonations clothed in its Elysian light stand thenceforward in the minds of those who have once contemplated them as memorials of that gentle and exalted content which extends itself over all thoughts and actions with which it coexists. The great secret of morals is love; or a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own. A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he

must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination; and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause. Poetry enlarges the circumference of the imagination by replenishing it with thought of ever new delight, which have the power of attracting and assimilating to their own nature all other thoughts, and which form new intervals and interstices whose void for ever craves fresh food. Poetry strengthens the faculty which is the organ of the moral nature of man, in the same manner as exercise strengthens a limb. A poet therefore would do ill to embody his own conceptions of right and wrong, which are usually those of his place and time, in his poetical creations, which participate in neither By this assumption of the inferior office of interpreting the effect in which perhaps after all he might acquit himself but imperfectly, he would resign a glory in a participation in the cause. There was little danger that Homer, or any of the eternal poets should have so far misunderstood themselves as to have abdicated this throne of their widest dominion. Those in whom the poetical faculty, though great, is less intense, as Euripides, Lucan, Tasso, Spenser, have frequently affected a moral aim, and the effect of their poetry is diminished in exact proportion to the degree in which they compel us to advert to this purpose.

Homer and the cyclic poets were followed at a certain interval by the dramatic and lyrical poets of Athens, who flourished contemporaneously with all that is most perfect in the kindred expressions of the poetical faculty; architecture, painting, music the dance, sculpture, philosophy, and, we may add, the forms of civil life. For although the scheme of Athenian society was deformed by many imperfections which the poetry existing in chivalry and Christianity has erased from the habits and institutions of modern Europe; yet never at any other period has so much energy, beauty, and virtue, been developed; never was blind strength and stubborn form so disciplined and rendered subject to the will of man, or that will less repugnant to the dictates of the beautiful and the true, as during the century which preceded the death of Socrates. Of no other epoch in the history of our species have we records and fragments stamped so visibly with the image of the divinity in man. But it is poetry alone, in form, in action, or in language, which has rendered this epoch memorable above all others, and the storehouse of examples to everlasting time. For written poetry existed at that epoch simultaneously with the other arts, and it is an idle inquiry to

demand which gave and which received the light, which all, as from a common focus, have scattered over the darkest periods of succeeding time. We know no more of cause and effect than a constant conjunction of events: poetry is ever found to coexist with whatever other arts contribute to the happiness and perfection of man. I appeal to what has already been established to distinguish between the cause and the effect.

It was at the period here adverted to, that the drama had its birth; and however a succeeding writer may have equalled or surpassed those few great specimens of the Athenian drama which have been preserved to us, it is indisputable that the art itself never was understood or practised according to the true philosophy of it, as at Athens. For the Athenians employed language, action, music, painting, the dance, and religious institutions, to produce a common effect in the representation of the highest idealisms of passion and of power; each division in the art was made perfect in its kind by artists of the most consummate skill, and was disciplined into a beautiful proportion and unity one towards the other. On the modern stage a few only of the elements capable of expressing the image of the poet's conception are employed at once. We have tragedy without music and dancing; and music and dancing without the highest impersonations of which they are the fit accompaniment, and both without religion and solemnity. Religious institution has indeed been usually banished from the stage. Our system of divesting the actor's face of a mask, on which the many expressions appropriated to his dramatic character might be moulded into one permanent and unchanging expression, is favourable only to a partial and inharmonious effect; it is fit for nothing but a monologue, where all the attention may be directed to some great master of ideal mimicry. The modern practice of blending comedy with tragedy, though liable to great abuse in point of practice, is undoubtedly an extension of the dramatic circle; but the comedy should be as in KING LEAR, universal, ideal, and sublime. It is perhaps the intervention of this principle which determines the balance in favour of KING LEAR against the OEDIPUS TYRANNUS or the AGAMEMNON, or, if you will, the trilogies with which they are connected; unless the intense power of the choral poetry, especially that of the latter, should be considered as restoring the equilibrium. KING LEAR, if it can sustain this comparison, may be judged to be the most perfect specimen of the dramatic art existing in the world; in spite of the narrow conditions to which the poet was subjected by the ignorance of the

philosophy of the drama which has prevailed in modern Europe. Calderon, in his religious AUTOS, has attempted to fulfil some of the high conditions of dramatic representation neglected by Shakespeare; such as the establishing a relation between the drama and religion and the accommodating them to music and dancing; but he omits the observation of conditions still more important, and more is lost than gained by the substitution of the rigidly-defined and ever-repeated idealisms of a distorted superstition for the living impersonations of the truth of human passion.

But I digress. — The connexion of scenic exhibitions with the improvement or corruption of the manners of men, has been universally recognized: in other words, the presence or absence of poetry in its most perfect and universal form, has been found to be connected with good and evil in conduct or habit. The corruption which has been imputed to the drama as an effect, begins when the poetry employed in its constitution ends: I appeal to the history of manners whether the periods of the growth of the one and the decline of the other have not corresponded with an exactness equal to any example of moral cause and effect.

The drama at Athens, or wheresoever else it may have approached to its perfection, ever co-existed with the moral and intellectual greatness of the age. The tragedies of the Athenian poets are as mirrors in which the spectator beholds himself, under a thin disguise of circumstance, stript of all but that ideal perfection and energy which every one feels to be the internal type of all that he loves, admires, and would become. The imagination is enlarged by a sympathy with pains and passions so mighty, that they distend in their conception the capacity of that by which they are conceived; the good affections are strengthened by pity, indignation, terror, and sorrow; and an exalted calm is prolonged from the satiety of this high exercise of them into the tumult of familiar life: even crime is disarmed of half its horror and all its contagion by being represented as the fatal consequence of the unfathomable agencies of nature; error is thus divested of its wilfulness; men can no longer cherish it as the creation of their choice. In a drama of the highest order there is little food for censure or hatred; it teaches rather self-knowledge and self-respect. Neither the eye nor the mind can see itself, unless reflected upon that which it resembles. The drama, so long as it continues to express poetry, is as a prismatic and many-sided mirror, which collects the brightest rays of human nature and divides and reproduces them from the simplicity of these elementary forms, and touches them with

majesty and beauty, and multiplies all that it reflects, and endows it with the power of propagating its like wherever it may fall.

But in periods of the decay of social life, the drama sympathizes with that decay. Tragedy becomes a cold imitation of the form of the great masterpieces of antiquity, divested of all harmonious accompaniment of the kindred arts; and often the very form misunderstood, or a weak attempt to teach certain doctrines, which the writer considers as moral truths; and which are usually no more than specious flatteries of some gross vice or weakness, with which the author, in common with his auditors, are infected. Hence what has been called the classical and domestic drama. Addison's CATO is a specimen of the one; and would it were not superfluous to cite examples of the other! To such purposes poetry cannot be made subservient. Poetry is a sword of lightning, ever unsheathed, which consumes the scabbard that would contain it. And thus we observe that all dramatic writings of this nature are unimaginative in a singular degree; they affect sentiment and passion, which, divested of imagination, are other names for caprice and appetite. The period in our own history of the grossest degradation of the drama is the reign of Charles II, when all forms in which poetry had been accustomed to be expressed became hymns to the triumph of kingly power over liberty and virtue. Milton stood alone illuminating an age unworthy of him. At such periods the calculating principle pervades all the forms of dramatic exhibition, and poetry ceases to be expressed upon them. Comedy loses its ideal universality: wit succeeds to humour; we laugh from self-complacency and triumph, instead of pleasure; malignity, sarcasm, and contempt, succeed to sympathetic merriment; we hardly laugh, but we Obscenity, which is ever blasphemy against the divine beauty in life, becomes, from the very veil which it assumes, more active if less disgusting: it is a monster for which the corruption of society for ever brings forth new food, which it devours in secret.

The drama being that form under which a greater number of modes of expression of poetry are susceptible of being combined than any other, the connexion of poetry and social good is more observable in the drama than in whatever other form. And it is indisputable that the highest perfection of human society has ever corresponded with the highest dramatic excellence; and that the corruption or the extinction of the drama in a nation where it has once flourished, is a mark of a corruption of manners and an extinction of the energies which sustain the soul of social life. But, as Machiavelli says

of political institutions, that life may be preserved and renewed, if men should arise capable of bringing back the drama to its principles. And this is true with respect to poetry in its most extended sense: all language, institution and form, require not only to be produced but to be sustained: the office and character of a poet participates in the divine nature as regards providence, no less than as regards creation.

Civil war, the spoils of Asia, and the fatal predominance first of the Macedonian, and then of the Roman arms, were so many symbols of the extinction or suspension of the creative faculty in Greece. The bucolic writers, who found patronage under the lettered tyrants of Sicily and Egypt, were the latest representatives of its most glorious reign. Their poetry is intensely melodious, like the odour of the tuberose, it overcomes and sickens the spirit with excess of sweetness; whilst the poetry of the preceding age was as a meadow-gale of June, which mingles the fragrance all the flowers of the field, and adds a quickening and harmonizing spirit of its own, which endows the sense with a power of sustaining its extreme delight. The bucolic and erotic delicacy in written poetry is correlative with that softness in statuary, music and the kindred arts, and even in manners and institutions, which distinguished the epoch to which I now refer. Nor is it the poetical faculty itself, or any misapplication of it, to which this want of harmony is to be imputed. An equal sensibility to the influence of the senses and the affections is to be found in the writings of Homer and Sophocles: the former, especially, has clothed sensual and pathetic images with irresistible attractions. Their superiority over these succeeding writers consists in the presence of those thoughts which belong to the inner faculties of our nature, not in the absence of those which are connected with the external: their incomparable perfection consists in a harmony of the union of all. It is not what the erotic poets have, but what they have not, in which their imperfection consists. It is not inasmuch as they were poets, but inasmuch as they were not poets, that they can be considered with any plausibility as connected with the corruption of their age. Had that corruption availed so as to extinguish in them the sensibility to pleasure, passion, and natural scenery, which is imputed to them as an imperfection, the last triumph of evil would have been achieved. For the end of social corruption is to destroy all sensibility to pleasure; and, therefore, it is corruption. It begins at the imagination and the intellect as at the core, and distributes itself thence as a paralysing venom, through the affections into

the very appetites, until all become a torpid mass in which hardly sense survives. At the approach of such a period, poetry ever addresses itself to those faculties which are the last to be destroyed, and its voice is heard, like the footsteps of Astraea, departing from the world. Poetry ever communicates all the pleasure which men are capable of receiving: it is ever still the light of life; the source of whatever of beautiful or generous or true can have place in an evil time. It will readily be confessed that those among the luxurious citizens of Syracuse and Alexandria, who were delighted with the poems of Theocritus, were less cold, cruel, and sensual than the remnant of their tribe. But corruption must utterly have destroyed the fabric of human society before poetry can ever cease. The sacred links of that chain have never been entirely disjoined, which descending through the minds of many men is attached to those great minds, whence as from a magnet the invisible effluence is sent forth, which at once connects, animates, and sustains the life of all. It is the faculty which contains within itself the seeds at once of its own and of social renovation. And let us not circumscribe the effects of the bucolic and erotic poetry within the limits of the sensibility of those to whom it was addressed. They may have perceived the beauty of those immortal compositions, simply as fragments and isolated portions: those who are more finely organized, or born in a happier age, may recognize them as episodes to that great poem, which all poets, like the cooperating thoughts of one great mind, have built up since the beginning of the world.

The same revolutions within a narrower sphere had place in ancient Rome; but the actions and forms of its social life never seem to have been perfectly saturated with the poetical element. The Romans appear to have considered the Greeks as the selectest treasuries of the selectest forms of manners and of nature, and to have abstained from creating in measured language, sculpture, music, or architecture, anything which might bear a particular relation to their own condition, whilst it should bear a general one to the universal constitution of the world. But we judge from partial evidence, and we judge perhaps partially Ennius, Varro, Pacuvius, and Accius, all great poets, have been lost. Lucretius is in the highest, and Virgil in a very high sense, a creator. The chosen delicacy of expressions of the latter, are as a mist of light which conceal from us the intense and exceeding truth of his conceptions of nature. Livy is instinct with poetry. Yet Horace, Catullus, Ovid, and generally the other great writers of the Virgilian age,

saw man and nature in the mirror of Greece. The institutions also, and the religion of Rome were less poetical than those of Greece, as the shadow is less vivid than the substance. Hence poetry in Rome, seemed to follow, rather than accompany, the perfection of political and domestic society. The true poetry of Rome lived in its institutions; for whatever of beautiful, true, and majestic, they contained, could have sprung only from the faculty which creates the order in which they consist. The life of Camillus, the death of Regulus; the expectation of the senators, in their godlike state, of the victorious Gauls: the refusal of the republic to make peace with Hannibal, after the battle of Cannae, were not the consequences of a refined calculation of the probable personal advantage to result from such a rhythm and order in the shows of life, to those who were at once the poets and the actors of these immortal dramas. The imagination beholding the beauty of this order, created it out of itself according to its own idea; the consequence was empire, and the reward everliving fame. These things are not the less poetry quid carent vate sacro. They are the episodes of that cyclic poem written by Time upon the memories of men. The Past, like an inspired rhapsodist, fills the theatre of everlasting generations with their harmony.

At length the ancient system of religion and manners had fulfilled the circle of its revolutions. And the world would have fallen into utter anarchy and darkness, but that there were found poets among the authors of the Christian and chivalric systems of manners and religion, who created forms of opinion and action never before conceived; which, copied into the imaginations of men, become as generals to the bewildered armies of their thoughts. It is foreign to the present purpose to touch upon the evil produced by these systems: except that we protest, on the ground of the principles already established, that no portion of it can be attributed to the poetry they contain.

It is probable that the poetry of Moses, Job, David, Solomon, and Isaiah, had produced a great effect upon the mind of Jesus and his disciples. The scattered fragments preserved to us by the biographers of this extraordinary person, are all instinct with the most vivid poetry. But his doctrines seem to have been quickly distorted. At a certain period after the prevalence of a system of opinions founded upon those promulgated by him, the three forms into which Plato had distributed the faculties of mind underwent a sort of apotheosis, and became the object of the worship of the civilized world. Here it is to be confessed that ‘Light seems to thicken,’ and

The crow makes wing to the rooky wood,
Good things of day begin to droop and drowse,
And night's black agents to their preys do rouze.

But mark how beautiful an order has sprung from the dust and blood of this fierce chaos! how the world, as from a resurrection, balancing itself on the golden wings of knowledge and of hope, has reassumed its yet unwearied flight into the heaven of time. Listen to the music, unheard by outward ears, which is as a ceaseless and invisible wind, nourishing its everlasting course with strength and swiftness.

The poetry in the doctrines of Jesus Christ, and the mythology and institutions of the Celtic conquerors of the Roman empire, outlived the darkness and the convulsions connected with their growth and victory, and blended themselves in a new fabric of manners and opinion. It is an error to impute the ignorance of the dark ages to the Christian doctrines or the predominance of the Celtic nations. Whatever of evil their agencies may have contained sprang from the extinction of the poetical principle, connected with the progress of despotism and superstition. Men, from causes too intricate to be here discussed, had become insensible and selfish: their own will had become feeble, and yet they were its slaves, and thence the slaves of the will of others: lust, fear, avarice, cruelty, and fraud, characterized a race amongst whom no one was to be found capable of CREATING in form, language, or institution. The moral anomalies of such a state of society are not justly to be charged upon any class of events immediately connected with them, and those events are most entitled to our approbation which could dissolve it most expeditiously. It is unfortunate for those who cannot distinguish words from thoughts, that many of these anomalies have been incorporated into our popular religion.

It was not until the eleventh century that the effects of the poetry of the Christian and chivalric systems began to manifest themselves. The principle of equality had been discovered and applied by Plato in his Republic, as the theoretical rule of the mode in which the materials of pleasure and of power, produced by the common skill and labour of human beings, ought to be distributed among them. The limitations of this rule were asserted by him to be determined only by the sensibility of each, or the utility to result to all. Plato, following the doctrines of Timaeus and Pythagoras, taught also a moral and intellectual system of doctrine, comprehending at once the past,

the present, and the future condition of man. Jesus Christ divulged the sacred and eternal truths contained in these views to mankind, and Christianity, in its abstract purity, became the exoteric expression of the esoteric doctrines of the poetry and wisdom of antiquity. The incorporation of the Celtic nations with the exhausted population of the south, impressed upon it the figure of the poetry existing in their mythology and institutions. The result was a sum of the action and reaction of all the causes included in it; for it may be assumed as a maxim that no nation or religion can supersede any other without incorporating into itself a portion of that which it supersedes. The abolition of personal and domestic slavery, and the emancipation of women from a great part of the degrading restraints of antiquity, were among the consequences of these events.

The abolition of personal slavery is the basis of the highest political hope that it can enter into the mind of man to conceive. The freedom of women produced the poetry of sexual love. Love became a religion, the idols of whose worship were ever present. It was as if the statues of Apollo and the Muses had been endowed with life and motion, and had walked forth among their worshippers; so that earth became peopled by the inhabitants of a diviner world. The familiar appearance and proceedings of life became wonderful and heavenly, and a paradise was created as out of the wrecks of Eden. And as this creation itself is poetry, so its creators were poets; and language was the instrument of their art: ‘Galeotto fu il libro, e chi lo scrisse.’ The Provencal Trouveurs, or inventors, preceded Petrarch, whose verses are as spells, which unseal the inmost enchanted fountains of the delight which is in the grief of love. It is impossible to feel them without becoming a portion of that beauty which we contemplate: it were superfluous to explain how the gentleness and the elevation of mind connected with these sacred emotions can render men more amiable, more generous and wise, and lift them out of the dull vapours of the little world of self. Dante understood the secret things of love even more than Petrarch. His Vita Nuova is an inexhaustible fountain of purity of sentiment and language: it is the idealized history of that period, and those intervals of his life which were dedicated to love. His apotheosis of Beatrice in Paradise, and the gradations of his own love and her loveliness, by which as by steps he feigns himself to have ascended to the throne of the Supreme Cause, is the most glorious imagination of modern poetry. The acutest critics have justly reversed the judgement of the vulgar, and the order of the great acts

of the ‘Divine Drama’, in the measure of the admiration which they accord to the Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. The latter is a perpetual hymn of everlasting love. Love, which found a worthy poet in Plato alone of all the ancients, has been celebrated by a chorus of the greatest writers of the renovated world; and the music has penetrated the caverns of society, and its echoes still drown the dissonance of arms and superstition. At successive intervals, Ariosto, Tasso, Shakespeare, Spenser, Calderon, Rousseau, and the great writers of our own age, have celebrated the dominion of love, planting as it were trophies in the human mind of that sublimest victory over sensuality and force. The true relation borne to each other by the sexes into which human kind is distributed, has become less misunderstood; and if the error which confounded diversity with inequality of the powers of the two sexes has been partially recognized in the opinions and institutions of modern Europe, we owe this great benefit to the worship of which chivalry was the law, and poets the prophets.

The poetry of Dante may be considered as the bridge thrown over the stream of time, which unites the modern and ancient world. The distorted notions of invisible things which Dante and his rival Milton have idealized, are merely the mask and the mantle in which these great poets walk through eternity enveloped and disguised. It is a difficult question to determine how far they were conscious of the distinction which must have subsisted in their minds between their own creeds and that of the people. Dante at least appears to wish to mark the full extent of it by placing Riphaeus, whom Virgil calls justissimns unus, in Paradise, and observing a most heretical caprice in his distribution of rewards and punishments. And Milton’s poem contains within itself a philosophical refutation of that system, of which by a strange and natural antithesis, it has been a chief popular support. Nothing can exceed the energy and magnificence of the character of Satan as expressed in Paradise Lost. It is a mistake to suppose that he could ever have been intended for the popular personification of evil. Implacable hate, patient cunning, and a sleepless refinement of device to inflict the extremest anguish on an enemy, these things are evil; and, although venial in a slave are not to be forgiven in a tyrant; although redeemed by much that ennobles his defeat in one subdued, are marked by all that dishonours his conquest in the victor. Milton’s Devil as a moral being is as far superior to his God, as one who perseveres in some purpose which he has conceived to be excellent in spite of adversity and torture, is to one who in the cold security of

undoubted triumph inflicts the most horrible revenge upon his enemy, not from any mistaken notion of inducing him to repent of a perseverance in enmity, but with the alleged design of exasperating him to deserve new torments. Milton has so far violated the popular creed (if this shall be judged to be a violation) as to have alleged no superiority of moral virtue to his God over his Devil. And this bold neglect of a direct moral purpose is the most decisive proof of the supremacy of Milton's genius. He mingled as it were the elements of human nature as colours upon a single pallet, and arranged them in the composition of his great picture according to the laws of epic truth; that is, according to the laws of that principle by which a series of actions of the external universe and of intelligent and ethical beings is calculated to excite the sympathy of succeeding generations of mankind. The Divina Commedia and Paradise Lost have conferred upon modern mythology a systematic form; and when change and time shall have added one more superstition to the mass of those which have arisen and decayed upon the earth, commentators will be learnedly employed in elucidating the religion of ancestral Europe, only not utterly forgotten because it will have been stamped with the eternity of genius.

Homer was the first and Dante the second epic poet: that is, the second poet, the series of whose creations bore a defined and intelligible relation to the knowledge and sentiment and religion of the age in which he lived, and of the ages which followed it: developing itself in correspondence with their development. For Lucretius had limed the wings of his swift spirit in the dregs of the sensible world; and Virgil, with a modesty that ill became his genius, had affected the fame of an imitator, even whilst he created anew all that he copied; and none among the flock of mock-birds, though their notes were sweet, Apollonius Rhodius, Quintus Calaber, Nonnus, Lucan, Statius, or Claudian, have sought even to fulfil a single condition of epic truth. Milton was the third epic poet. For if the title of epic in its highest sense be refused to the Aeneid, still less can it be conceded to the Orlando Furioso, the Gerusalemme Liberata, the Lusiad, or the Fairy Queen.

Dante and Milton were both deeply penetrated with the ancient religion of the civilized world; and its spirit exists in their poetry probably in the same proportion as its forms survived in the unreformed worship of modern Europe. The one preceded and the other followed the Reformation at almost equal intervals. Dante was the first religious reformer, and Luther surpassed him rather in the rudeness and acrimony, than in the boldness of his

censures of papal usurpation. Dante was the first awakener of entranced Europe; he created a language, in itself music and persuasion, out of a chaos of inharmonious barbarisms. He was the congregator of those great spirits who presided over the resurrection of learning; the Lucifer of that starry flock which in the thirteenth century shone forth from republican Italy, as from a heaven, into the darkness of the benighted world. His very words are instinct with spirit; each is as a spark, a burning atom of inextinguishable thought; and many yet lie covered in the ashes of their birth, and pregnant with a lightning which has yet found no conductor. All high poetry is infinite; it is as the first acorn, which contained all oaks potentially. Veil after veil may be undrawn, and the inmost naked beauty of the meaning never exposed. A great poem is a fountain for ever overflowing with the waters of wisdom and delight; and after one person and one age has exhausted all its divine effluence which their peculiar relations enable them to share, another and yet another succeeds, and new relations are ever developed, the source of an unforeseen and an unconceived delight.

The age immediately succeeding to that of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, was characterized by a revival of painting, sculpture, and architecture. Chaucer caught the sacred inspiration, and the superstructure of English literature is based upon the materials of Italian invention.

But let us not be betrayed from a defence into a critical history of poetry and its influence on society. Be it enough to have pointed out the effects of poets, in the large and true sense of the word, upon their own and all succeeding times.

But poets have been challenged to resign the civic crown to reasoners and mechanists, on another plea. It is admitted that the exercise of the imagination is most delightful, but it is alleged that that of reason is more useful. Let us examine as the grounds of this distinction, what is here meant by utility. Pleasure or good, in a general sense, is that which the consciousness of a sensitive and intelligent being seeks, and in which, when found, it acquiesces. There are two kinds of pleasure, one durable, universal and permanent; the other transitory and particular. Utility may either express the means of producing the former or the latter. In the former sense, whatever strengthens and purifies the affections, enlarges the imagination, and adds spirit to sense, is useful. But a narrower meaning may be assigned to the word utility, confining it to express that which banishes the importunity of the wants of our animal nature, the surrounding men with

security of life, the dispersing the grosser delusions of superstition, and the conciliating such a degree of mutual forbearance among men as may consist with the motives of personal advantage.

Undoubtedly the promoters of utility, in this limited sense, have their appointed office in society. They follow the footsteps of poets, and copy the sketches of their creations into the book of common life. They make space, and give time. Their exertions are of the highest value, so long as they confine their administration of the concerns of the inferior powers of our nature within the limits due to the superior ones. But whilst the sceptic destroys gross superstitions, let him spare to deface, as some of the French writers have defaced, the eternal truths charactered upon the imaginations of men. Whilst the mechanist abridges, and the political economist combines labour, let them beware that their speculations, for want of correspondence with those first principles which belong to the imagination, do not tend, as they have in modern England, to exasperate at once the extremes of luxury and want. They have exemplified the saying, 'To him that hath, more shall be given; and from him that hath not, the little that he hath shall be taken away.' The rich have become richer, and the poor have become poorer; and the vessel of the state is driven between the Scylla and Charybdis of anarchy and despotism. Such are the effects which must ever flow from an unmitigated exercise of the calculating faculty.

It is difficult to define pleasure in its highest sense; the definition involving a number of apparent paradoxes. For, from an inexplicable defect of harmony in the constitution of human nature, the pain of the inferior is frequently connected with the pleasures of the superior portions of our being. Sorrow, terror, anguish, despair itself, are often the chosen expressions of an approximation to the highest good. Our sympathy in tragic fiction depends on this principle; tragedy delights by affording a shadow of the pleasure which exists in pain. This is the source also of the melancholy which is inseparable from the sweetest melody. The pleasure that is in sorrow is sweeter than the pleasure of pleasure itself. And hence the saying, 'It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of mirth.' Not that this highest species of pleasure is necessarily linked with pain. The delight of love and friendship, the ecstasy of the admiration of nature, the joy of the perception and still more of the creation of poetry, is often wholly unalloyed.

The production and assurance of pleasure in this highest sense is true utility. Those who produce and preserve this pleasure are poets or poetical philosophers.

The exertions of Locke, Hume, Gibbon, Voltaire, Rousseau, [Footnote: Although Rousseau has been thus classed, he was essentially a poet. The others, even Voltaire, were mere reasoners.] and their disciples, in favour of oppressed and deluded humanity, are entitled to the gratitude of mankind. Yet it is easy to calculate the degree of moral and intellectual improvement which the world would have exhibited, had they never lived. A little more nonsense would have been talked for a century or two; and perhaps a few more men, women, and children, burnt as heretics. We might not at this moment have been congratulating each other on the abolition of the Inquisition in Spain. But it exceeds all imagination to conceive what would have been the moral condition of the world if neither Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Calderon, Lord Bacon, nor Milton, had ever existed; if Raphael and Michael Angelo had never been born; if the Hebrew poetry had never been translated; if a revival of the study of Greek literature had never taken place; if no monuments of ancient sculpture had been handed down to us; and if the poetry of the religion of the ancient world had been extinguished together with its belief. The human mind could never, except by the intervention of these excitements, have been awakened to the invention of the grosser sciences, and that application of analytical reasoning to the aberrations of society, which it is now attempted to exalt over the direct expression of the inventive and creative faculty itself.

We have more moral, political and historical wisdom, than we know how to reduce into practice; we have more scientific and economical knowledge than can be accommodated to the just distribution of the produce which it multiplies. The poetry in these systems of thought, is concealed by the accumulation of facts and calculating processes. There is no want of knowledge respecting what is wisest and best in morals, government, and political economy, or at least, what is wiser and better than what men now practise and endure. But we let '*I* DARE NOT wait upon I WOULD, like the poor cat in the adage.' We want the creative faculty to imagine that which we know; we want the generous impulse to act that which we imagine; we want the poetry of life: our calculations have outrun conception; we have eaten more than we can digest. The cultivation of those

sciences which have enlarged the limits of the empire of man over the external world, has, for want of the poetical faculty, proportionally circumscribed those of the internal world; and man, having enslaved the elements, remains himself a slave. To what but a cultivation of the mechanical arts in a degree disproportioned to the presence of the creative faculty, which is the basis of all knowledge, is to be attributed the abuse of all invention for abridging and combining labour, to the exasperation of the inequality of mankind? From what other cause has it arisen that the discoveries which should have lightened, have added a weight to the curse imposed on Adam? Poetry, and the principle of Self, of which money is the visible, incarnation, are the God and Mammon of the world.

The functions of the poetical faculty are two-fold; by one it creates new materials of knowledge and power and pleasure; by the other it engenders in the mind a desire to reproduce and arrange them according to a certain rhythm and order which may be called the beautiful and the good. The cultivation of poetry is never more to be desired than at periods when, from an excess of the selfish and calculating principle, the accumulation of the materials of external life exceed the quantity of the power of assimilating them to the internal laws of human nature. The body has then become too unwieldy for that which animates it.

Poetry is indeed something divine. It is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred. It is at the same time the root and blossom of all other systems of thought; it is that from which all spring, and that which adorns all; and that which, if blighted, denies the fruit and the seed, and withholds from the barren world the nourishment and the succession of the scions of the tree of life. It is the perfect and consummate surface and bloom of all things; it is as the odour and the colour of the rose to the texture of the elements which compose it, as the form and splendour of unfaded beauty to the secrets of anatomy and corruption. What were virtue, love, patriotism, friendship — what were the scenery of this beautiful universe which we inhabit; what were our consolations on this side of the grave — and what were our aspirations beyond it, if poetry did not ascend to bring light and fire from those eternal regions where the owl-winged faculty of calculation dare not ever soar? Poetry is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will. A man cannot say, ‘I will compose poetry.’ The greatest poet even cannot

say it; for the mind in creation is as a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness; this power arises from within, like the colour of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed, and the conscious portions of our natures are unprophetic either of its approach or its departure. Could this influence be durable in its original purity and force, it is impossible to predict the greatness of the results; but when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conceptions of the poet. I appeal to the greatest poets of the present day, whether it is not an error to assert that the finest passages of poetry are produced by labour and study. The toil and the delay recommended by critics, can be justly interpreted to mean no more than a careful observation of the inspired moments, and an artificial connexion of the spaces between their suggestions by the intertexture of conventional expressions; a necessity only imposed by the limitedness of the poetical faculty itself; for Milton conceived the Paradise Lost as a whole before he executed it in portions; We have his own authority also for the muse having ‘dictated’ to him the ‘unpremeditated song’. And let this be an answer to those who would allege the fifty-six various readings of the first line of the Orlando Furioso. Compositions so produced are to poetry what mosaic is to painting. This instinct and intuition of the poetical faculty, is still more observable in the plastic and pictorial arts; a great statue or picture grows under the power of the artist as a child in the mother’s womb; and the very mind which directs the hands in formation is incapable of accounting to itself for the origin, the gradations, or the media of the process.

Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds. We are aware of evanescent visitations of thought and feeling sometimes associated with place or person, sometimes regarding our own mind alone, and always arising unforeseen and departing unbidden, but elevating and delightful beyond all expression; so that even in the desire and regret they leave, there cannot but be pleasure, participating as it does in the nature of its object. It is as it were the interpenetration of a diviner nature through our own; but its footsteps are like those of a wind over the sea, which the coming calm erases, and whose traces remain only, as on the wrinkled sand which paves it. These and corresponding conditions of being are experienced principally by those of the most delicate sensibility and the

most enlarged imagination; and the state of mind produced by them is at war with every base desire. The enthusiasm of virtue, love, patriotism, and friendship, is essentially linked with such emotions; and whilst they last, self appears as what it is, an atom to a universe. Poets are not only subject to these experiences as spirits of the most refined organization, but they can colour all that they combine with the evanescent hues of this ethereal world; a word, a trait in the representation of a scene or a passion, will touch the enchanted chord, and reanimate, in those who have ever experienced these emotions, the sleeping, the cold, the buried image of the past. Poetry thus makes immortal all that is best and most beautiful in the world; it arrests the vanishing apparitions which haunt the interlunations of life, and veiling them, or in language or in form, sends them forth among mankind, bearing sweet news of kindred joy to those with whom their sisters abide — abide, because there is no portal of expression from the caverns of the spirit which they inhabit into the universe of things. Poetry redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man.

Poetry turns all things to loveliness; it exalts the beauty of that which is most beautiful, and it adds beauty to that which is most deformed; it marries exultation and horror, grief and pleasure, eternity and change; it subdues to union under its light yoke, all irreconcilable things. It transmutes all that it touches, and every form moving within the radiance of its presence is changed by wondrous sympathy to an incarnation of the spirit which it breathes: its secret alchemy turns to potable gold the poisonous waters which flow from death through life; it strips the veil of familiarity from the world, and lays bare the naked and sleeping beauty, which is the spirit of its forms.

All things exist as they are perceived; at least in relation to the percipient. ‘The mind is its own place, and of itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.’ But poetry defeats the curse which binds us to be subjected to the accident of surrounding impressions. And whether it spreads its own figured curtain, or withdraws life’s dark veil from before the scene of things, it equally creates for us a being within our being. It makes us the inhabitants of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos. It reproduces the common universe of which we are portions and percipients, and it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being. It compels us to feel that which we perceive, and to imagine that which we know. It creates anew the

universe, after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration. It justifies the bold and true words of Tasso: Non merita nome di creatore, se non Iddio ed il Poeta.

A poet, as he is the author to others of the highest wisdom, pleasure, virtue and glory, so he ought personally to be the happiest, the best, the wisest, and the most illustrious of men. As to his glory, let time be challenged to declare whether the fame of any other institutor of human life be comparable to that of a poet. That he is the wisest, the happiest, and the best, inasmuch as he is a poet, is equally incontrovertible: the greatest poets have been men of the most spotless virtue, of the most consummate prudence, and, if we would look into the interior of their lives, the most fortunate of men: and the exceptions, as they regard those who possessed the poetic faculty in a high yet inferior degree, will be found on consideration to confine rather than destroy the rule. Let us for a moment stoop to the arbitration of popular breath, and usurping and uniting in our own persons the incompatible characters of accuser, witness, judge, and executioner, let us decide without trial, testimony, or form, that certain motives of those who are ‘there sitting where we dare not soar’, are reprehensible. Let us assume that Homer was a drunkard, that Virgil was a flatterer, that Horace was a coward, that Tasso a madman, that Lord Bacon was a peculator, that Raphael was a libertine, that Spenser was a poet laureate. It is inconsistent with this division of our subject to cite living poets, but posterity has done ample justice to the great names now referred to. Their errors have been weighed and found to have been dust in the balance; if their sins ‘were as scarlet, they are now white as snow’; they have been washed in the blood of the mediator and redeemer, Time. Observe in what a ludicrous chaos the imputation of real or fictitious crime have been confused in the contemporary calumnies against poetry and poets; consider how little is, as it appears — or appears, as it is; look to your own motives, and judge not, lest ye be judged.

Poetry, as has been said, differs in this respect from logic, that it is not subject to the control of the active powers of the mind, and that its birth and recurrence have no necessary connexion with the consciousness or will. It is presumptuous to determine that these are the necessary conditions of all mental causation, when mental effects are experienced unsusceptible of being referred to them. The frequent recurrence of the poetical power, it is obvious to suppose, may produce in the mind a habit of order and harmony

correlative with its own nature and its effects upon other minds. But in the intervals of inspiration, and they may be frequent without being durable, a poet becomes a man, and is abandoned to the sudden reflux of the influences under which others habitually live. But as he is more delicately organized than other men, and sensible to pain and pleasure, both his own and that of others, in a degree unknown to them, he will avoid the one and pursue the other with an ardour proportioned to this difference. And he renders himself obnoxious to calumny, when he neglects to observe the circumstances under which these objects of universal pursuit and flight have disguised themselves in one another's garments.

But there is nothing necessarily evil in this error, and thus cruelty, envy, revenge, avarice, and the passions purely evil, have never formed any portion of the popular imputations on the lives of poets.

I have thought it most favourable to the cause of truth to set down these remarks according to the order in which they were suggested to my mind, by a consideration of the subject itself, instead of observing the formality of a polemical reply; but if the view which they contain be just, they will be found to involve a refutation of the arguers against poetry, so far at least as regards the first division of the subject. I can readily conjecture what should have moved the gall of some learned and intelligent writers who quarrel with certain versifiers; I confess myself, like them, unwilling to be stunned, by the Theseids of the hoarse Codri of the day. Bavius and Maevius undoubtedly are, as they ever were, insufferable persons. But it belongs to a philosophical critic to distinguish rather than confound.

The first part of these remarks has related to poetry in its elements and principles; and it has been shown, as well as the narrow limits assigned them would permit, that what is called poetry, in a restricted sense, has a common source with all other forms of order and of beauty, according to which the materials of human life are susceptible of being arranged, and which is poetry in a universal sense.

The second part will have for its object an application of these principles to the present state of the cultivation of poetry, and a defence of the attempt to idealize the modern forms of manners and opinions, and compel them into a subordination to the imaginative and creative faculty. For the literature of England, an energetic development of which has ever preceded or accompanied a great and free development of the national will, has arisen as it were from a new birth. In spite of the low-thoughted envy which would

undervalue contemporary merit, our own will be a memorable age in intellectual achievements, and we live among such philosophers and poets as surpass beyond comparison any who have appeared since the last national struggle for civil and religious liberty. The most unfailing herald, companion, and follower of the awakening of a great people to work a beneficial change in opinion or institution, is poetry. At such periods there is an accumulation of the power of communicating and receiving intense and impassioned conceptions respecting man and nature. The persons in whom this power resides may often, as far as regards many portions of their nature, have little apparent correspondence with that spirit of good of which they are the ministers. But even whilst they deny and abjure, they are yet compelled to serve, the power which is seated on the throne of their own soul. It is impossible to read the compositions of the most celebrated writers of the present day without being startled with the electric life which burns within their words. They measure the circumference and sound the depths of human nature with a comprehensive and all-penetrating spirit, and they are themselves perhaps the most sincerely astonished at its manifestations; for it is less their spirit than the spirit of the age. Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets which sing to battle, and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.

THE END

A VINDICATION OF NATURAL DIET

"Our simple life wants little, and true taste
Hires not the pale drudge Luxury to waste
The scene it would adorn, and therefore still
Nature, with all her children, haunts the hill."
Epipsychidion.

PREFATORY NOTICE.

Shelley's "Vindication of Natural Diet" was first written as part of the notes to "Queen Mab," which was privately issued in 1813. Later in the same year the "Vindication" was separately published as a pamphlet, and it is from this later publication that the present reprint is made. The original pamphlet is now exceedingly scarce, but it is said to have been reprinted in 1835, as an appendix to an American medical work, the "Manual on Health," by Dr. Turnbull, of New York. Two copies only are known to have been preserved of this excessively rare pamphlet, though possibly others may be hidden in unfrequented libraries and out of the way country houses. One copy is in the British Museum, and the other is in the possession of Mr. H. Buxton Forman, who has reprinted it in his great edition of Shelley, where it forms the opening part of the second volume of the "Prose Works."

The main object of Shelley's pamphlet was to show that a vegetable diet is the most *natural*, and therefore the best for mankind. It is not an appeal to humanitarian sentiment, but an argument based on individual experience, concerning the intimate connection of health and morality with food. It has no claim to originality in the arguments adduced; its materials being avowedly drawn from the works of Dr. Lambe and Mr. Newton, of whom an account may be read in Mr. Howard Williams' "Catena," but the style is Shelley's own, and the pamphlet is in many ways one of the most interesting and characteristic of his prose works. Perhaps its most remarkable feature is to be found in the very pertinent remarks as to the bearing of Vegetarianism on those questions of economy and social reform, which are now forcing themselves more and more on the attention of the English people.

At the time of writing his "Vindication of Natural Diet," Shelley had himself, for some months past, adopted a Vegetarian diet, chiefly, no doubt, through his intimacy with the Newton family. There seems no reason to doubt that he continued to practise Vegetarianism during the rest of his stay in England, that is from 1813 to the spring of 1818. Leigh Hunt's account of his life at Marlow, in 1817, is as follows:—"This was the round of his daily life. He was up early, breakfasted sparingly, wrote this 'Revolt of Islam' all the morning; went out in his boat, or in the woods, with some Greek author or the Bible in his hands; came home to a dinner of vegetables (for he took neither meat nor wine); visited, if necessary, the sick and fatherless, whom others gave Bibles to and no help; wrote or studied again, or read to his wife and friends the whole evening; took a crust of bread or a glass of whey for his supper, and went early to bed."

In 1818, he left England for Italy, and during his last four years, the most dreamy and speculative period of his life, he seems to have been less strict in his observance of Vegetarian practice. It is not true however, as has sometimes been asserted, that Shelley lost faith in the principles of Vegetarianism; for his change in diet was owing partly to his well-known carelessness about his food, which became more marked at this time, and partly to a desire to avoid giving trouble to the other members of his household, which, as we see from a line in his letter to Maria Gisborne, written in 1820, "Though we eat little flesh and drink no wine" was not entirely a Vegetarian one. Yet, even at this period of his life, he himself was practically, if not systematically, a Vegetarian, for all his biographers agree in informing us that bread was literally his "staff of life." We cannot doubt that if he had lived in the present time he would have taken a leading part in the movement towards Food Reform. As it is, he has left us an invaluable legacy in his "Vindication of Natural Diet," perhaps the most powerful and eloquent plea ever put forward in favour of the Vegetarian cause.

He found in this the presage of his ideal future. To his enthusiastic faith in the transforming effect of the Vegetarian principle, we owe some of the finest passages in his poetry. In the close of the eighth canto of "Queen Mab," we have a picture of a time when man no more

Slays the lamb that looks him in the face.

It is the same ideal of bloodless innocence as that of Israel's prophet-poet, who declares that in the Holy Mountain they shall not hurt nor destroy. Never did sage or singer, prophet or priest, or poet, see a brighter

vision of the future than that which is imaged in the description of a glorified earth, from which cruelty, bloodshed, and tyranny, have been banished.

"My brethren, we are free! The fruits are glowing
Beneath the stars, and the night-winds are flowing
O'er the ripe corn. The birds and beasts are dreaming.
Never again may blood of bird or beast
Stain with its venomous stream a human feast,

To the pure skies in accusation steaming;
Avenging poisons shall have ceased
To feed disease and fear and madness;
The dwellers of the earth and air
Shall throng around our steps in gladness,
Seeking their food or refuge there.
Our toil from thought all glorious forms shall cull,
To make this earth, our home, more beautiful;
And Science, and her sister Poesy,
Shall clothe in light the fields and cities of the free!"

* * * * * *

Over the plain the throngs were scattered then
In groups around the fires, which from the sea
Even to the gorge of the first mountain-glen
Blazed wide and far. The banquet of the free
Was spread beneath many a dark cypress-tree;
Beneath whose spires which swayed in the red flame
Reclining as they ate, of liberty,
And hope, and justice, and Laone's name,
Earth's children did a woof of happy converse frame.
Their feast was such as Earth, the general mother,
Pours from her fairest bosom, when she smiles
In the embrace of Autumn. To each other
As when some parent fondly reconciles
Her warring children, she their wrath beguiles
With her own sustenance; they relenting weep: —
Such was this festival, which, from their isles
And continents and winds and oceans deep,

All shapes might throng to share that fly or walk or creep.

That this was no mere poetic sentiment is proved by this pamphlet, which is an earnest vindication of Vegetarianism.

H. S. S.
W. E. A. A.

A VINDICATION OF NATURAL DIET.

I hold that the depravity of the physical and moral nature of man originated in his unnatural habits of life. The origin of man, like that of the universe of which he is a part, is enveloped in impenetrable mystery. His generations either had a beginning, or they had not. The weight of evidence in favour of each of these suppositions seems tolerably equal; and it is perfectly unimportant to the present argument which is assumed. The language spoken, however, by the mythology of nearly all religions seems to prove, that at some distant period man forsook the path of nature, and sacrificed the purity and happiness of his being to unnatural appetites. The date of this event seems to have also been that of some great change in the climates of the earth, with which it has an obvious correspondence. The allegory of Adam and Eve eating of the tree of evil, and entailing upon their posterity the wrath of God, and the loss of everlasting life, admits of no other explanation than the disease and crime that have flowed from unnatural diet. Milton was so well aware of this, that he makes Raphael thus exhibit to Adam the consequence of his disobedience: —

... Immediately a place
Before his eyes appeared: sad, noisome, dark:
A lazar-house it seemed; wherein were laid
Numbers of all diseased: all maladies
Of ghastly spasm, or racking torture, qualms
Of heart-sick agony, all feverous kinds,

Convulsions, epilepsies, fierce catarrhs;
Intestine stone and ulcer, cholic pangs,
Dæmoniac frenzy, moping melancholy,
And moon-struck madness, pining atrophy,
Marasmus, and wide-wasting pestilence,
Dropsies, and asthmas, and joint-racking rheums.

And how many thousands more might not be added to this frightful catalogue!

The story of Prometheus is one likewise which, although universally admitted to be allegorical, has never been satisfactorily explained. Prometheus stole fire from heaven, and was chained for this crime to Mount

Caucasus, where a vulture continually devoured his liver, that grew to meet its hunger. Hesiod says, that, before the time of Prometheus, mankind were exempt from suffering; that they enjoyed a vigorous youth, and that death, when at length it came, approached like sleep, and gently closed their eyes. Again, so general was this opinion, that Horace, a poet of the Augustan age, writes: —

Audax omnia perpeti,
Gens humana ruit per vetitum nefas,
Audax Iapeti genus
Ignem fraude mala gentibus intulit,
Post ignem æthereâ domo
Subductum, macies et nova febrium
Terris incubuit cohors
Semotique prius tarda necessitas
Lethi corripuit gradum.

How plain a language is spoken by all this. Prometheus (who represents the human race) effected some great change in the condition of his nature, and applied fire to culinary purposes; thus inventing an expedient for screening from his disgust the horrors of the shambles. From this moment his vitals were devoured by the vulture of disease. It consumed his being in every shape of its loathsome and infinite variety, inducing the soul-quelling sinkings of premature and violent death. All vice arose from the ruin of healthful innocence. Tyranny, superstition, commerce, and inequality, were then first known, when reason vainly attempted to guide the wanderings of exacerbated passion. I conclude this part of the subject with an extract from Mr. Newton's Defence of Vegetable Regimen, from whom I have borrowed this interpretation of the fable of Prometheus.

"Making allowance for such transposition of the events of the allegory as time might produce after the important truths were forgotten, which this portion of the ancient mythology was intended to transmit, the drift of the fable seems to be this: Man at his creation was endowed with the gift of perpetual youth; that is, he was not formed to be a sickly suffering creature as we now see him, but to enjoy health, and to sink by slow degrees into the bosom of his parent earth without disease or pain. Prometheus first taught the use of animal food (primus bovem occidit Prometheus) and of fire, with which to render it more digestible and pleasing to the taste. Jupiter, and the rest of the gods, foreseeing the consequences of these inventions, were

amused or irritated at the short-sighted devices of the newly-formed creature, and left him to experience the sad effects of them. Thirst, the necessary concomitant of a flesh diet," (perhaps of all diet vitiated by culinary preparation) "ensued; water was resorted to, and man forfeited the inestimable gift of health which he had received from heaven; he became diseased, the partaker of a precarious existence and no longer descended slowly to his grave."

But just disease to luxury succeeds,
And every death its own avenger breeds;
The fury passions from that blood began,
And turned on man a fiercer savage — Man.

Man and the animals whom he has infected with his society, or depraved by his dominion, are alone diseased. The wild hog, the mouflon, the bison, and the wolf are perfectly exempt from malady, and invariably die either from external violence or natural old age. But the domestic hog, the sheep, the cow, and the dog are subject to an incredible variety of distempers; and, like the corrupters of their nature, have physicians who thrive upon their miseries. The supereminence of man is like Satan's, a supereminence of pain; and the majority of his species, doomed to penury, disease, and crime, have reason to curse the untoward event that, by enabling him to communicate his sensations, raised him above the level of his fellow animals. But the steps that have been taken are irrevocable. The whole of human science is comprised in one question — How can the advantages of intellect and civilisation be reconciled with the liberty and pure pleasures of natural life? How can we take the benefits and reject the evils of the system which is now interwoven with all the fibres of our being? I believe that abstinence from animal food and spirituous liquors would in a great measure capacitate us for the solution of this important question.

Comparative anatomy teaches us that man resembles frugivorous animals in everything, and carnivorous in nothing: he has neither claws wherewith to seize his prey, nor distinct and pointed teeth to tear the living fibre. A mandarin of the first class, with nails two inches long, would probably find them alone inefficient to hold even a hare. After every subterfuge of gluttony, the bull must be degraded into the ox, and the ram into the wether, by an unnatural and inhuman operation, that the flaccid fibre may offer a fainter resistance to rebellious nature. It is only by softening and disguising dead flesh by culinary preparation that it is

rendered susceptible of mastication or digestion, and that the sight of its bloody juices and raw horror does not excite intolerable loathing and disgust. Let the advocate of animal food force himself to a decisive experiment on its fitness, and, as Plutarch recommends, tear a living lamb with his teeth, and plunging his head into its vitals, slake his thirst with the steaming blood; when fresh from the deed of horror, let him revert to the irresistible instincts of nature that would rise in judgment against it, and say, Nature formed me for such work as this. Then, and then only, would he be consistent.

Man resembles no carnivorous animal. There is no exception, except man be one, to the rule of herbivorous animals having cellulated colons.

The orang-outang perfectly resembles man both in the order and number of his teeth. The orang-outang is the most anthropomorphous of the ape tribe, all of which are strictly frugivorous. There is no other species of animals in which this analogy exists. In many frugivorous animals, the canine teeth are more pointed and distinct than those of man. The resemblance also of the human stomach to that of the orang-outang is greater than to that of any other animal.

The intestines are also identical with those of herbivorous animals, which present a large surface for absorption, and have ample and cellulated colons. The cæcum also, though short, is larger than that of carnivorous animals; and even here the orang-outang retains its accustomed similarity.

The structure of the human frame then is that of one fitted to a pure vegetable diet, in every essential particular. It is true that the reluctance to abstain from animal food, in those who have been long accustomed to its stimulus, is so great in some persons of weak minds, as to be scarcely overcome; but this is far from bringing any argument in its favour. A lamb which was fed for some time on flesh by a ship's crew, refused its natural diet at the end of the voyage. There are numerous instances of horses, sheep, oxen, and even wood-pigeons, having been taught to live upon flesh, until they have loathed their natural aliment. Young children evidently prefer pastry, oranges, apples, and other fruit, to the flesh of animals, until, by the gradual depravation of the digestive organs, the free use of vegetables has, for a time, produced serious inconveniences; *for a time*, I say, since there never was an instance wherein a change from spirituous liquors and animal food to vegetables and pure water, has failed ultimately to invigorate the body, by rendering its juices bland and consentaneous, and

to restore to the mind that cheerfulness and elasticity, which not one in fifty possesses on the present system. A love of strong liquors is also with difficulty taught to infants. Almost every one remembers the wry faces the first glass of port produced. Unsophisticated instinct is invariably unerring; but to decide on the fitness of animal food, from the perverted appetites which its constrained adoption produce, is to make the criminal a judge in his own cause; it is even worse, it is appealing to the infatuated drunkard in a question of the salubrity of brandy.

What is the cause of morbid action in the animal system? Not the air we breathe, for our fellow denizens of nature breathe the same uninjured; not the water we drink, if remote from the pollutions of man and his inventions, for the animals drink it too; not the earth we tread upon; not the unobscured sight of glorious nature, in the wood, the field, or the expanse of sky and ocean; nothing that we are or do in common with the undiseased inhabitants of the forest. Something then wherein we differ from them; our habit of altering our food by fire, so that our appetite is no longer a just criterion for the fitness of its gratification. Except in children there remains no traces of that instinct which determines, in all other animals, what aliment is natural or otherwise; and so perfectly obliterated are they in the reasoning adults of our species, that it has become necessary to urge considerations, drawn from comparative anatomy, to prove that we are naturally frugivorous.

Crime is madness. Madness is disease. Whenever the cause of disease shall be discovered, the root, from which all vice and misery have so long overshadowed the globe, will lie bare to the axe. All the exertions of man, from that moment, may be considered as tending to the clear profit of his species. No sane mind in a sane body resolves upon a real crime. It is a man of violent passions, bloodshot eyes, and swollen veins, that alone can grasp the knife of murder. The system of a simple diet promises no Utopian advantages. It is no mere reform of legislation, whilst the furious passions and evil propensities of the human heart, in which it had its origin, are still unassuaged. It strikes at the root of all evil, and is an experiment which may be tried with success, not alone by nations, but by small societies, families, and even individuals.

In no cases has a return to vegetable diet produced the slightest injury: in most it has been attended with changes undeniably beneficial. Should ever a physician be born with the genius of Locke, I am persuaded that he might trace all bodily and mental derangements to our unnatural habits, as clearly

as that philosopher has traced all knowledge to sensation. What prolific sources of disease are not those mineral and vegetable poisons that have been introduced for its extirpation? How many thousands have become murderers and robbers, bigots and domestic tyrants, dissolute and abandoned adventurers, from the use of fermented liquors; who had they slaked their thirst only at the mountain stream, would have lived but to diffuse the happiness of their own unperverted feelings. How many groundless opinions and absurd institutions have not received a general sanction from the sottishness and intemperance of individuals? Who will assert that, had the populace of Paris drank at the pure source of the Seine, and satisfied their hunger at the ever-furnished table of vegetable nature that they would have lent their brutal suffrage to the proscription-list of Robespierre? Could a set of men, whose passions were not perverted by unnatural stimuli, look with coolness on an *auto da fè*? Is it to be believed that a being of gentle feelings, rising from his meal of roots, would take delight in sports of blood?

Was Nero a man of temperate life? Could you read calm health in his cheek, flushed with ungovernable propensities of hatred for the human race? Did Muley Ismael's pulse beat evenly, was his skin transparent, did his eyes beam with healthfulness, and its invariable concomitants, cheerfulness and benignity? Though history has decided none of these questions, a child could not hesitate to answer in the negative. Surely the bile-suffused cheek of Buonaparte, his wrinkled brow, and yellow eye, the ceaseless inquietude of his nervous system, speak no less plainly the character of his unresting ambition than his murders and his victories. It is impossible had Bonaparte descended from a race of vegetable feeders, that he could have either the inclination or the power to ascend the throne of the Bourbons. The desire of tyranny could scarcely be excited in the individual; the power to tyrannise would certainly not be delegated by a society neither frenzied by inebriation, nor rendered impotent or irrational by disease. Pregnant, indeed, with inexhaustible calamity is the renunciation of instinct, as it concerns our physical nature; arithmetic cannot enumerate, nor reason perhaps suspect, the multitudinous sources of disease in civilised life. Even common water, that apparently innoxious *pabulum*, when corrupted by the filth of populous cities, is a deadly and insidious destroyer. Who can wonder that all the inducements held out by God himself in the Bible to

virtue should have been vainer than a nurse's tale; and that those dogmas, apparently favourable to the intolerant and angry passions, should have alone been deemed essential; whilst Christians are in the daily practice of all those habits which have infected with disease and crime, not only the reprobate sons, but these favoured children of the common Father's love. Omnipotence itself could not save them from the consequences of this original and universal sin.

There is no disease, bodily or mental, which adoption of vegetable diet and pure water has not infallibly mitigated, wherever the experiment has been fairly tried. Debility is gradually converted into strength, disease into healthfulness: madness, in all its hideous variety, from the ravings of the fettered maniac, to the unaccountable irrationalities of ill-temper, that make a hell of domestic life, into a calm and considerable evenness of temper, that alone might offer a certain pledge of the future moral reformation of society. On a natural system of diet, old age would be our last and our only malady: the term of our existence would be protracted; we should enjoy life, and no longer preclude others from the enjoyment of it; all sensational delights would be infinitely more exquisite and perfect; the very sense of being would then be a continued pleasure, such as we now feel it in some few and favoured moments of our youth. By all that is sacred in our hopes for the human race, I conjure those who love happiness and truth, to give a fair trial to the vegetable system. Reasoning is surely superfluous on a subject whose merits an experience of six months would set for ever at rest. But it is only among the enlightened and benevolent that so great a sacrifice of appetite and prejudice can be expected, even though its ultimate excellence should not admit of dispute.

It is found easier, by the short-sighted victims of disease, to palliate their torments by medicine, than to prevent them by regimen. The vulgar of all ranks are invariably sensual and indocile; yet I cannot but feel myself persuaded, that when the benefits of vegetable diet are mathematically proved; when it is as clear, that those who live naturally are exempt from premature death, as that nine is not one, the most sottish of mankind will feel a preference towards a long and tranquil, contrasted with a short and painful life. On the average, out of sixty persons, four die in three years. In April, 1814, a statement will be given that sixty persons, all having lived

more than three years on vegetables and pure water, are then *in perfect health*. More than two years have now elapsed; *not one of them has died*; no such example will be found in any sixty persons taken at random. Seventeen persons of all ages (the families of Dr. Lambe and Mr. Newton) have lived for seven years on this diet without a death, and almost without the slightest illness. Surely, when we consider that some of these were infants, and one a martyr to asthma, now nearly subdued, we may challenge any seventeen persons taken at random in this city to exhibit a parallel case. Those who may have been excited to question the rectitude of established habits of diet, by these loose remarks, should consult Mr. Newton's luminous and eloquent essay. It is from that book, and from the conversation of its excellent and enlightened author, that I have derived the materials which I here present to the public.

When these proofs come fairly before the world, and are clearly seen by all who understand arithmetic, it is scarcely possible that abstinence from aliments demonstrably pernicious should not become universal.

In proportion to the number of proselytes, so will be the weight of evidence; and when a thousand persons can be produced, living on vegetables and distilled water, who have to dread no disease but old age, the world will be compelled to regard animal flesh and fermented liquors as slow but certain poison. The change which would be produced by simpler habits on political economy is sufficiently remarkable. The monopolising eater of animal flesh would no longer destroy his constitution by devouring an acre at a meal, and many loaves of bread would cease to contribute to gout, madness, and apoplexy, in the shape of a pint of porter or a dram of gin, when appeasing the long-protracted famine of the hard-working peasant's hungry babes. The quantity of nutritious vegetable matter consumed in fattening the carcase of an ox, would afford ten times the sustenance, undepraving indeed, and incapable of generating disease, if gathered immediately from the bosom of the earth.

The most fertile districts of the habitable globe are now actually cultivated by men for animals, at a delay and waste of aliment absolutely incapable of calculation. It is only the wealthy that can, to any great degree, even now, indulge the unnatural craving for dead flesh, and they pay for the greater licence of the privilege, by subjection to supernumerary diseases. Again, the spirit of the nation that should take the lead in this great reform

would insensibly become agricultural: commerce, with all its vice, selfishness, and corruption, would gradually decline; more natural habits would produce gentler manners, and the excessive complication of political relations would be so far simplified that every individual might feel and understand why he loved his country, and took a personal interest in its welfare. How would England, for example, depend on the caprices of foreign rulers, if she contained within herself all the necessaries, and despised whatever they possessed of the luxuries of life? How could they starve her into compliance with their views? Of what consequence would it be that they refused to take her woollen manufactures, when large and fertile tracts of the island ceased to be allotted to the waste of pasturage? On a natural system of diet, we should require no spices from India; no wines from Portugal, Spain, France, or Madeira; none of those multitudinous articles of luxury, for which every corner of the globe is rifled, and which are the causes of so much individual rivalship, such calamitous and sanguinary national disputes.

In the history of modern times, the avarice of commercial monopoly, no less than the ambition of weak and wicked chiefs, seems to have fomented the universal discord, to have added stubbornness to the mistakes of cabinets, and indocility to the infatuation of the people. Let it ever be remembered, that it is the direct influence of commerce to make the interval between the richest and the poorest man wider and more unconquerable. Let it be remembered that it is a foe to every thing of real worth and excellence in the human character. The odious and disgusting aristocracy of wealth, is built upon the ruins of all that is good in chivalry or republicanism; and luxury is the forerunner of a barbarism scarce capable of cure. Is it impossible to realize a state of society, where all the energies of man shall be directed to the production of his solid happiness?

Certainly, if this advantage (the object of all political speculation) be in any degree attainable, it is attainable only by a community which holds out no factitious incentives to the avarice and ambition of the few, and which is internally organized for the liberty, security, and comfort of the many. None must be entrusted with power (and money is the completest species of power) who do not stand pledged to use it exclusively for the general benefit. But the use of animal flesh and fermented liquors, directly militates with this equality of the rights of man. The peasant cannot gratify these

fashionable cravings without leaving his family to starve. Without disease and war, those sweeping curtailers of population, pasturage would include a waste too great to be afforded. The labour requisite to support a family is far lighter than is usually supposed. The peasantry work, not only for themselves, but for the aristocracy, the army, and the manufacturers.

The advantage of a reform in diet is obviously greater than that of any other. It strikes at the root of the evil. To remedy the abuses of legislation, before we annihilate the propensities by which they are produced, is to suppose, that by taking away the effect, the cause will cease to operate. But the efficacy of this system depends entirely on the proselytism of individuals, and grounds its merits, as a benefit to the community, upon the total change of the dietetic habits in its members. It proceeds securely from a number of particular cases to one that is universal, and has this advantage over the contrary mode, that one error does not invalidate all that has gone before.

Let not too much, however, be expected from this system. The healthiest among us is not exempt from hereditary disease. The most symmetrical, athletic, and long-lived, is a being inexpressibly inferior to what he would have been, had not the unnatural habits of his ancestors accumulated for him a certain portion of malady and deformity. In the most perfect specimen of civilized man something is still found wanting by the physiological critic. Can a return to nature, then, instantaneously eradicate predispositions that have been slowly taking root in the silence of innumerable ages? Indubitably not. All that I contend for is, that from the moment of the relinquishing all unnatural habits, no new disease is generated; and that the predisposition to hereditary maladies gradually perishes for want of its accustomed supply. In cases of consumption, cancer, gout, asthma, and scrofula, such is the invariable tendency of a diet of vegetables and pure water.

Those who may be induced by these remarks to give the vegetable system a fair trial, should, in the first place, date the commencement of their practice from the moment of their conviction. All depends upon the breaking through a pernicious habit resolutely and at once. Dr. Trotter asserts that no drunkard was ever reformed by gradually relinquishing his dram. Animal flesh, in its effects on the human stomach, is analogous to a dram. It is similar in the kind, though differing in the degree, of its operation. The proselyte to a pure diet must be warned to expect a

temporary diminution of muscular strength. The subtraction of a powerful stimulus will suffice to account for this event. But it is only temporary, and is succeeded by an equable capability for exertion far surpassing his former various and fluctuating strength. Above all, he will acquire an easiness of breathing, by which the same exertion is performed with a remarkable exemption from that painful and difficult panting now felt by almost every one after hastily climbing an ordinary mountain. He will be equally capable of bodily exertion or mental application after as before his simple meal. He will feel none of the narcotic effects of ordinary diet. Irritability, the direct consequence of exhausting stimuli, would yield to the power of natural and tranquil impulses. He will no longer pine under the lethargy of *ennui*, that unconquerable weariness of life, more dreaded than death itself. He will escape the epidemic madness that broods over its own injurious notions of the Deity, and "realizes the hell that priests and beldams feign." Every man forms, as it were, his god from his own character; to the divinity of one of simple habits, no offering would be more acceptable than the happiness of his creatures. He would be incapable of hating or persecuting others for the love of God. He will find, moreover, a system of simple diet to be a system of perfect epicurism. He will no longer be incessantly occupied in blunting and destroying those organs from which he expects his gratification.

The pleasures of taste to be derived from a dinner of potatoes, beans, peas, turnips, lettuces, with a dessert of apples, gooseberries, strawberries, currants, raspberries, and in winter, oranges, apples, and pears, is far greater than is supposed. Those who wait until they can eat this plain fare with the sauce of appetite will scarcely join with the hypocritical sensualist at a lord mayor's feast, who declaims against the pleasures of the table. Solomon kept a thousand concubines, and owned in despair that all was vanity. The man whose happiness is constituted by the society of one amiable woman would find some difficulty in sympathising with the disappointment of this venerable debauchee.

I address myself not only to the young enthusiast, the ardent devotee of truth and virtue, the pure and passionate moralist, yet unvitiated by the contagion of the world. He will embrace a pure system, from its abstract truth, its beauty, its simplicity and its promise of wide-extended benefit; unless custom has turned poison into food, he will hate the brutal pleasures of the chase by instinct; it will be a contemplation full of horror and disappointment to his mind, that beings capable of the gentlest and most

admirable sympathies, should take delight in the death-pangs and last convulsions of dying animals. The elderly man whose youth has been poisoned by intemperance, or who has lived with apparent moderation, and is afflicted with a variety of painful maladies, would find his account in a beneficial change, produced without the risk of poisonous medicines.The mother, to whom the perpetual restlessness of disease, and unaccountable deaths incident to her children, are the causes of incurable unhappiness, would on this diet experience the satisfaction of beholding their perpetual health and natural playfulness.

The most valuable lives are daily destroyed by diseases, that it is dangerous to palliate and impossible to cure by medicine. How much longer will man continue to pimp for the gluttony of death, his most insidious, implacable, and eternal foe? The proselyte to a simple and natural diet, who desires health, must from the moment of his conversion attend to these rules —

Never take any substance into the stomach that once had life.

Drink no liquid but water restored to its original purity by distillation.

APPENDIX.

Persons on vegetable diet have been remarkable for longevity. The first Christians practised abstinence from animal flesh, on a principle of self mortification. Other instances are, Old Parr 152; Mary Patten 136; A Shepherd in Hungary 126; Patrick O'Neale 113; Joseph Elkins 103; Elizabeth de Val 101; Aurungzebe 100; St. Anthony 105; James, the Hermit 104; Arsenius 120; St. Epiphanius 115; Simeon 112; and Rombald 120.

Mr. Newton's mode of reasoning on longevity is ingenious and conclusive. "Old Parr, healthy as the wild animals, attained to the age of 152 years. All men might be as healthy as the wild animals. Therefore all men might attain to the age of 152 years." The conclusion is sufficiently modest. Old Parr cannot be supposed to have escaped the inheritance of disease, amassed by the unnatural habits of his ancestors. The term of human life may be expected to be infinitely greater, taking into the

consideration all the circumstances that must have contributed to abridge even that of Parr.

It may be here remarked, that the author and his wife have lived on vegetables for eight months. The improvements of health and temper here stated, is the result of his own experience.

The Biography

Chateau de Chillon, Switzerland, visited by Shelley and Lord Byron in 1817

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY By John Addington Symonds

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CHAPTER 1. BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD.

It is worse than useless to deplore the irremediable; yet no man, probably, has failed to mourn the fate of mighty poets, whose dawning gave the promise of a glorious day, but who passed from earth while yet the light that shone in them was crescent. That the world should know Marlowe and Giorgione, Raphael and Mozart, only by the products of their early manhood, is indeed a cause for lamentation, when we remember what the long lives of a Bach and Titian, a Michelangelo and Goethe, held in reserve for their maturity and age. It is of no use to persuade ourselves, as some have done, that we possess the best work of men untimely slain. Had Sophocles been cut off in his prime, before the composition of "Oedipus"; had Handel never merged the fame of his forgotten operas in the immortal music of his oratorios; had Milton been known only by the poems of his youth, we might with equal plausibility have laid that flattering unction to our heart. And yet how shallow would have been our optimism, how fallacious our attempt at consolation. There is no denying the fact that when a young Marcellus is shown by fate for one brief moment, and withdrawn before his springtime has bought forth the fruits of summer, we must bow in silence to the law of waste that rules inscrutably in nature.

Such reflections are forced upon us by the lives of three great English poets of this century. Byron died when he was thirty-six, Keats when he was twenty-five, and Shelley when he was on the point of completing his thirtieth year. Of the three, Keats enjoyed the briefest space for the development of his extraordinary powers. His achievement, perfect as it is in some poetic qualities, remains so immature and incomplete that no conjecture can be hazarded about his future. Byron lived longer, and produced more than his brother poets. Yet he was extinguished when his genius was still ascendant, when his "swift and fair creations" were issuing like worlds from an archangel's hands. In his case we have perhaps only to deplore the loss of masterpieces that might have equalled, but could scarcely have surpassed, what we possess. Shelley's early death is more to be regretted. Unlike Keats and Byron, he died by a mere accident. His faculties were far more complex, and his aims were more ambitious than theirs. He therefore needed length of years for their co-ordination; and if a

fuller life had been allotted him, we have the certainty that from the discords of his youth he would have wrought a clear and lucid harmony.

These sentences form a somewhat gloomy prelude to a biography. Yet the student of Shelley's life, the sincere admirer of his genius, is almost forced to strike a solemn key-note at the outset. We are not concerned with one whose "little world of man" for good or ill was perfected, but with one whose growth was interrupted just before the synthesis of which his powers were capable had been accomplished.

August 4, 1792, is one of the most memorable dates in the history of English literature. On this day Percy Bysshe Shelley was born at Field Place, near Horsham, in the county of Sussex. His father, named Timothy, was the eldest son of Bysshe Shelley, Esquire, of Goring Castle, in the same county. The Shelley family could boast of great antiquity and considerable wealth. Without reckoning earlier and semi-legendary honours, it may here be recorded that it is distinguished in the elder branch by one baronetcy dating from 1611, and by a second in the younger dating from 1806. In the latter year the poet's grandfather received this honour through the influence of his friend the Duke of Norfolk. Mr. Timothy Shelley was born in the year 1753, and in 1791 he married Elizabeth, daughter of Charles Pilford, Esquire, a lady of great beauty, and endowed with fair intellectual ability, though not of a literary temperament. The first child of this marriage was the poet, named Bysshe in compliment to his grandfather, the then living head of the family, and Percy because of some remote connexion with the ducal house of Northumberland. Four daughters, Elizabeth, Mary, Hellen, and Margaret, and one son, John, who died in the year 1866, were the subsequent issue of Mr. Timothy Shelley's marriage. In the year 1815, upon the death of his father, he succeeded to the baronetcy, which passed, after his own death, to his grandson, the present Sir Percy Florence Shelley, as the poet's only surviving son.

Before quitting, once and for all, the arid region of genealogy, it may be worth mentioning that Sir Bysshe Shelley by his second marriage with Miss Elizabeth Jane Sydney Perry, heiress of Penshurst, became the father of five children, the eldest son of whom assumed the name of Shelley-Sidney, received a baronetcy, and left a son, Philip Charles Sidney, who was created Lord De l'Isle and Dudley. Such details are not without a certain value, inasmuch as they prove that the poet, who won for his ancient and honourable house a fame far more illustrious than titles can confer, was

sprung from a man of no small personal force and worldly greatness. Sir Bysshe Shelley owed his position in society, the wealth he accumulated, and the honours he transmitted to two families, wholly and entirely to his own exertions. Though he bore a name already distinguished in the annals of the English landed gentry, he had to make his own fortune under conditions of some difficulty. He was born in North America, and began life, it is said, as a quack doctor. There is also a legend of his having made a first marriage with a person of obscure birth in America. Yet such was the charm of his address, the beauty of his person, the dignity of his bearing, and the vigour of his will, that he succeeded in winning the hands and fortunes of two English heiresses; and, having begun the world with nothing, he left it at the age of seventy-four, bequeathing 300,000 pounds in the English Funds, together with estates worth 20,000 pounds a year to his descendents.

Percy Bysshe Shelley was therefore born in the purple of the English squirearchy; but never assuredly did the old tale of the swan hatched with the hen's brood of ducklings receive a more emphatic illustration than in this case. Gifted with the untameable individuality of genius, and bent on piercing to the very truth beneath all shams and fictions woven by society and ancient usage, he was driven by the circumstances of his birth and his surroundings into an exaggerated warfare with the world's opinion. His too frequent tirades against: —

The Queen of Slaves,
The hood-winked Angel of the blind and dead,
Custom, —

owed much of their asperity to the early influences brought to bear upon him by relatives who prized their position in society, their wealth, and the observance of conventional decencies, above all other things.

Mr. Timothy Shelley was in no sense of the word a bad man; but he was everything which the poet's father ought not to have been. As member for the borough of Shoreham, he voted blindly with his party; and that party looked to nothing beyond the interests of the gentry and the pleasure of the Duke of Norfolk. His philosophy was limited to a superficial imitation of Lord Chesterfield, whose style he pretended to affect in his familiar correspondence, though his letters show that he lacked the rudiments alike

of logic and of grammar. His religious opinions might be summed up in Clough's epigram: —

At church on Sunday to attend
Will serve to keep the world your friend.

His morality in like manner was purely conventional, as may be gathered from his telling his eldest son that he would never pardon a mesalliance, but would provide for as many illegitimate children as he chose to have. For the rest, he appears to have been a fairly good landlord, and a not unkind father, sociable and hospitable, somewhat vain and occasionally odd in manner, but qualified for passing muster with the country gentlemen around him. In the capacity to understand a nature which deviated from the ordinary type so remarkably as Shelley's, he was utterly deficient; and perhaps we ought to regard it as his misfortune that fate made him the father of a man who was among the greatest portents of originality and unconventionality that this century has seen. Toward an ordinary English youth, ready to sow his wild oats at college, and willing to settle at the proper age and take his place upon the bench of magistrates, Sir Timothy Shelley would have shown himself an indulgent father; and it must be conceded by the poet's biographer that if Percy Bysshe had but displayed tact and consideration on his side, many of the misfortunes which signalized his relations to his father would have been avoided.

Shelley passed his childhood at Field Place, and when he was about six years old began to be taught, together with his sisters, by Mr. Edwards, a clergyman who lived at Warnham. What is recorded of these early years we owe to the invaluable communications of his sister Hellen. The difference of age between her and her brother Bysshe obliges us to refer her recollections to a somewhat later period — probably to the holidays he spent away from Sion House and Eton. Still, since they introduce us to the domestic life of his then loved home, it may be proper to make quotations from them in this place. Miss Shelley tells us her brother "would frequently come to the nursery, and was full of a peculiar kind of pranks. One piece of mischief, for which he was rebuked, was running a stick through the ceiling of a low passage to find some new chamber, which could be made effective for some flights of his vivid imagination." He was very much attached to his sisters, and used to entertain them with stories, in which "an alchemist,

old and grey, with a long beard," who was supposed to abide mysteriously in the garret of Field Place, played a prominent part. "Another favourite theme was the 'Great Tortoise,' that lived in Warnham Pond; and any unwonted noise was accounted for by the presence of this great beast, which was made into the fanciful proportions most adapted to excite awe and wonder." To his friend Hogg, in after-years, Shelley often spoke about another reptile, no mere creature of myth or fable, the "Old Snake," who had inhabited the gardens of Field Place for several generations. This venerable serpent was accidentally killed by the gardener's scythe; but he lived long in the poet's memory, and it may reasonably be conjectured that Shelley's peculiar sympathy for snakes was due to the dim recollection of his childhood's favourite. Some of the games he invented to please his sisters were grotesque, and some both perilous and terrifying. "We dressed ourselves in strange costumes to personate spirits or fiends, and Bysshe would take a fire-stove and fill it with some inflammable liquid, and carry it flaming into the kitchen and to the back door." Shelley often took his sisters for long country rambles over hedge and fence, carrying them when the difficulties of the ground or their fatigue required it. At this time "his figure was slight and beautiful, — his hands were models, and his feet are treading the earth again in one of his race; his eyes too have descended in their wild fixed beauty to the same person. As a child, I have heard that his skin was like snow, and bright ringlets covered his head." Here is a little picture which brings the boy vividly before our eyes: "Bysshe ordered clothes according to his own fancy at Eton, and the beautifully fitting silk pantaloons, as he stood as almost all men and boys do, with their coat-tails near the fire, excited my silent though excessive admiration."

When he was ten years of age, Shelley went to school at Sion house, Brentford, an academy kept by Dr. Greenlaw, and frequented by the sons of London tradesmen, who proved but uncongenial companions to his gentle spirit. It is fortunate for posterity that one of his biographers, his second cousin Captain Medwin, was his schoolfellow at Sion House; for to his recollections we owe some details of great value. Medwin tells us that Shelley learned the classic languages almost by intuition, while he seemed to be spending his time in dreaming, now watching the clouds as they sailed across the school-room window, and now scribbling sketches of fir-trees and cedars in memory of Field Place. At this time he was subject to sleep-walking, and, if we may credit this biographer, he often lost himself in

reveries not far removed from trance. His favourite amusement was novel-reading; and to the many "blue books" from the Minerva press devoured by him in his boyhood, we may ascribe the style and tone of his first compositions. For physical sports he showed no inclination. "He passed among his school-fellows as a strange and unsocial being; for when a holiday relieved us from our tasks, and the other boys were engaged in such sports as the narrow limits of our prison-court allowed, Shelley, who entered into none of them, would pace backwards and forwards — I think I see him now — along the southern wall, indulging in various vague and undefined ideas, the chaotic elements, if I may say so, of what afterwards produced so beautiful a world."

Two of Shelley's most important biographical compositions undoubtedly refer to this period of his boyhood. The first is the passage in the Prelude to "Laon and Cythna" which describes his suffering among the unsympathetic inmates of a school: —

Thoughts of great deeds were mine, dear Friend, when first
The clouds which wrap this world from youth did pass.
I do remember well the hour which burst
My spirit's sleep: a fresh May-dawn it was,
When I walked forth upon the glittering grass,
And wept, I knew not why; until there rose
From the near school-room, voices, that, alas!
Were but one echo from a world of woes —
The harsh and grating strife of tyrants and of foes.

And then I clasped my hands and looked around —
— But none was near to mock my streaming eyes,
Which poured their warm drops on the sunny ground —
So without shame I spake:—"I will be wise,
And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
Such power, for I grow weary to behold
The selfish and the strong still tyrannize
Without reproach or check." I then controlled
My tears, my heart grew calm, and I was meek and bold.

And from that hour did I with earnest thought
Heap knowledge from forbidden mines of lore,
Yet nothing that my tyrants knew or taught
I cared to learn, but from that secret store
Wrought linked armour for my soul, before
It might walk forth to war among mankind.
Thus power and hope were strengthened more and more
Within me, till there came upon my mind
A sense of loneliness, a thirst with which I pined.

The second is a fragment on friendship preserved by Hogg. After defining that kind of passionate attachment which often precedes love in fervent natures, he proceeds: "I remember forming an attachment of this kind at school. I cannot recall to my memory the precise epoch at which this took pace; but I imagine it must have been at the age of eleven or twelve. The object of these sentiments was a boy about my own age, of a character eminently generous, brave, and gentle; and the elements of human feeling seemed to have been, from his birth, genially compounded within him. There was a delicacy and a simplicity in his manners, inexpressibly attractive. It has never been my fortune to meet with him since my school-boy days; but either I confound my present recollections with the delusions of past feelings, or he is now a source of honour and utility to every one around him. The tones of his voice were so soft and winning, that every word pierced into my heart; and their pathos was so deep, that in listening to him the tears have involuntarily gushed from my eyes. Such was the being for whom I first experienced the sacred sentiments of friendship." How profound was the impression made on his imagination and his feelings by this early friendship, may again be gathered from a passage in his note upon the antique group of Bacchus and Ampelus at Florence. "Look, the figures are walking with a sauntering and idle pace, and talking to each other as they walk, as you may have seen a younger and an elder boy at school, walking in some grassy spot of the play-ground with that tender friendship for each other which the age inspires."

These extracts prove beyond all question that the first contact with the outer world called into activity two of Shelley's strongest moral qualities — his hatred of tyranny and brutal force in any form, and his profound sentiment of friendship. The admiring love of women, which marked him

no less strongly, and which made him second only to Shakespere in the sympathetic delineation of a noble feminine ideal, had been already developed by his deep affection for his mother and sisters. It is said that he could not receive a letter from them without manifest joy.

"Shelley," says Medwin, "was at this time tall for his age, slightly and delicately built, and rather narrow-chested, with a complexion fair and ruddy, a face rather long than oval. His features, not regularly handsome, were set off by a profusion of silky brown hair, that curled naturally. The expression of his countenance was one of exceeding sweetness and innocence. His blue eyes were very large and prominent. They were at times, when he was abstracted, as he often was in contemplation, dull, and as it were, insensible to external objects; at others they flashed with the fire of intelligence. His voice was soft and low, but broken in its tones, — when anything much interested him, harsh and immodulated; and this peculiarity he never lost. He was naturally calm, but when he heard of or read of some flagrant act of injustice, oppression, or cruelty, then indeed the sharpest marks of horror and indignation were visible in his countenance."

Such as the child was, we shall find the man to have remained unaltered through the short space of life allowed him. Loving, innocent, sensitive, secluded from the vulgar concerns of his companions, strongly moralized after a peculiar and inborn type of excellence, drawing his inspirations from Nature and from his own soul in solitude, Shelley passed across the stage of this world, attended by a splendid vision which sustained him at a perilous height above the kindly race of men. The penalty of this isolation he suffered in many painful episodes. The reward he reaped in a measure of more authentic prophecy, and in a nobler realization of his best self, than could be claimed by any of his immediate contemporaries.

CHAPTER 2. ETON AND OXFORD.

In 1805 Shelley went from Sion House to Eton. At this time Dr. Keate was headmaster and Shelley's tutor was a Mr. Bethel, "one of the dullest men in the establishment." At Eton Shelley was not popular either with his teachers or his elder school-fellows, although the boys of his own age are said to have adored him. "He was all passion," writes Mrs. Shelley; "passionate in his resistance to an injury, passionate in his love:" and this vehemence of temperament he displayed by organizing a rebellion against fagging, which no doubt won for him the applause of his juniors and equals. It was not to be expected that a lad intolerant of rule and disregardful of restriction, who neglected punctuality in the performance of his exercises, while he spent his leisure in translating half of Pliny's history, should win the approbation of pedagogues. At the same time the inspired opponent of the fagging system, the scorner of games and muscular amusements, could not hope to find much favour with such martinets of juvenile convention as a public school is wont to breed. At Eton, as elsewhere, Shelley's uncompromising spirit brought him into inconvenient contact with a world of vulgar usage, while his lively fancy invested the commonplaces of reality with dark hues borrowed from his own imagination. Mrs. Shelley says of him, "Tamed by affection, but unconquered by blows, what chance was there that Shelley should be happy at a public school?" This sentence probably contains the pith of what he afterwards remembered of his own school life, and there is no doubt that a nature like his, at once loving and high-spirited, had much to suffer. It was a mistake, however, to suppose that at Eton there were any serious blows to bear, or to assume that laws of love which might have led a spirit so gentle as Shelley's, were adapted to the common stuff of which the English boy is formed. The latter mistake Shelley made continually throughout his youth; and only the advance of years tempered his passionate enthusiasm into a sober zeal for the improvement of mankind by rational methods. We may also trace at this early epoch of his life that untamed intellectual ambition — that neglect of the immediate and detailed for the transcendental and universal — which was a marked characteristic of his genius, leading him to fly at the highest while he overleaped the facts of ordinary human life. "From his earliest years," says Mrs. Shelley, "all his amusements and occupations were of a daring, and in one sense of the term,

lawless nature. He delighted to exert his powers, not as a boy, but as a man; and so with manly powers and childish wit, he dared and achieved attempts that none of his comrades could even have conceived. His understanding and the early development of imagination never permitted him to mingle in childish plays; and his natural aversion to tyranny prevented him from paying due attention to his school duties. But he was always actively employed; and although his endeavours were prosecuted with puerile precipitancy, yet his aim and thoughts were constantly directed to those great objects which have employed the thoughts of the greatest among men; and though his studies were not followed up according to school discipline, they were not the less diligently applied to." This high-soaring ambition was the source both of his weakness and his strength in art, as well as in his commerce with the world of men. The boy who despised discipline and sought to extort her secrets from nature by magic, was destined to become the philanthropist who dreamed of revolutionizing society by eloquence, and the poet who invented in "Prometheus Unbound" forms of grandeur too colossal to be animated with dramatic life.

A strong interest in experimental science had been already excited in him at Sion House by the exhibition of an orrery; and this interest grew into a passion at Eton. Experiments in chemistry and electricity, of the simpler and more striking kind, gave him intense pleasure — the more so perhaps because they were forbidden. On one occasion he set the trunk of an old tree on fire with a burning-glass: on another, while he was amusing himself with a blue flame, his tutor came into the room and received a severe shock from a highly-charged Leyden jar. During the holidays Shelley carried on the same pursuits at Field Place. "His own hands and clothes," says Miss Shelley, "were constantly stained and corroded with acids, and it only seemed too probable that some day the house would be burned down, or some serious mischief happen to himself or others from the explosion of combustibles." This taste for science Shelley long retained. If we may trust Mr. Hogg's memory, the first conversation which that friend had with him at Oxford consisted almost wholly of an impassioned monologue from Shelley on the revolution to be wrought by science in all realms of thought. His imagination was fascinated by the boundless vistas opened to the student of chemistry. When he first discovered that the four elements were not final, it gave him the acutest pleasure: and this is highly characteristic of the genius which was always seeking to transcend and reach the life of life

withdrawn from ordinary gaze. On the other hand he seems to have delighted in the toys of science, playing with a solar microscope, and mixing strangest compounds in his crucibles, without taking the trouble to study any of its branches systematically. In his later years he abandoned these pursuits. But a charming reminiscence of them occurs in that most delightful of his familiar poems, the "Letter to Maria Gisborne."

While translating Pliny and dabbling in chemistry, Shelley was not wholly neglectful of Etonian studies. He acquired a fluent, if not a correct, knowledge of both Greek and Latin, and astonished his contemporaries by the facility with which he produced verses in the latter language. His powers of memory were extraordinary, and the rapidity with which he read a book, taking in seven or eight lines at a glance, and seizing the sense upon the hint of leading words, was no less astonishing. Impatient speed and indifference to minutiae were indeed among the cardinal qualities of his intellect. To them we may trace not only the swiftness of his imaginative flight, but also his frequent satisfaction with the somewhat less than perfect in artistic execution.

That Shelley was not wholly friendless or unhappy at Eton may be gathered from numerous small circumstances. Hogg says that his Oxford rooms were full of handsome leaving books, and that he was frequently visited by old Etonian acquaintances. We are also told that he spend the 40 pounds gained by his first novel, "Zastrozzi," on a farewell supper to eight school-boy friends. A few lines, too, might be quoted from his own poem, the "Boat on the Serchio," to prove that he did not entertain a merely disagreeable memory of his school life. (Forman's edition, volume 4 page 115.) Yet the general experience of Eton must have been painful; and it is sad to read of this gentle and pure spirit being goaded by his coarser comrades into fury, or coaxed to curse his father and the king for their amusement. It may be worth mentioning that he was called "the Atheist" at Eton; and though Hogg explains this by saying that "the Atheist" was an official character among the boys, selected from time to time for his defiance of authority, yet it is not improbable that Shelley's avowed opinions may even then have won for him a title which he proudly claimed in after-life. To allude to his boyish incantations and nocturnal commerce with fiends and phantoms would scarcely be needful, were it not that they seem to have deeply tinged his imagination. While describing the growth of

his own genius in the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," he makes the following reference to circumstances which might otherwise be trivial: —

While yet a boy, I sought for ghosts, and sped
Thro' many a listening chamber, cave, and ruin,
And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing
Hopes of high talk with the departed dead.
I call'd on poisonous names with which our youth is fed,
I was not heard, I saw them not —
When, musing deeply on the lot
Of life, at that sweet time when winds are wooing
All vital things that wake to bring
News of birds and blossoming, —
Sudden, thy shadow fell on me;
I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstasy!

Among the Eton tutors was one whose name will always be revered by Shelley's worshippers; for he alone discerned the rare gifts of the strange and solitary boy, and Shelley loved him. Dr. Lind was an old man, a physician, and a student of chemistry. Shelley spent long hours at his house, conversing with him, and receiving such instruction in philosophy and science as the grey-haired scholar could impart. The affection which united them must have been of no common strength or quality; for when Shelley lay ill of a fever at Field Place, and had conceived the probably ill-founded notion that his father intended to place him in a mad-house, he managed to convey a message to his friend at Eton, on the receipt of which Dr. Lind travelled to Horsham, and by his sympathy and skill restored the sick boy's confidence. It may incidentally be pointed out that this story, credited as true by Lady Shelley in her Memorials, shows how early an estrangement had begun between the poet and his father. We look, moreover, vainly for that mother's influence which might have been so beneficial to the boy in whom "love and life were twins, born at one birth." From Dr. Lind Shelley not only received encouragement to pursue his chemical studies; but he also acquired the habit of corresponding with persons unknown to him, whose opinions he might be anxious to discover or dispute. This habit, as we shall see in the sequel, determined Shelley's fate on two important occasions of his life. In return for the help extended to him at Eton, Shelley conferred

undying fame on Dr. Lind; the characters of Zonaras in "Prince Athanase," and of the hermit in "Laon and Cythna," are portraits painted by the poet of his boyhood's friend.

The months which elapsed between Eton and Oxford were an important period in Shelley's life. At this time a boyish liking for his cousin, Harriet Grove, ripened into real attachment; and though there was perhaps no formal engagement between them, the parents on both sides looked with approval on their love. What it concerns us to know about this early passion, is given in a letter from a brother of Miss Grove. "Bysshe was at that time (just after leaving Eton) more attached to my sister Harriet than I can express, and I recollect well the moonlight walks we four had at Strode and also at St. Irving's; that, I think, was the name of the place, then the Duke of Norfolk's, at Horsham." For some time after the date mentioned in this letter, Shelley and Miss Grove kept up an active correspondence; but the views he expressed on speculative subjects soon began to alarm her. She consulted her mother and her father, and the engagement was broken off. The final separation does not seem to have taken place until the date of Shelley's expulsion from Oxford; and not the least cruel of the pangs he had to suffer at that period, was the loss of one to whom he had given his whole heart unreservedly. The memory of Miss Grove long continued to haunt his imagination, nor is there much doubt that his first unhappy marriage was contracted while the wound remained unhealed. The name of Harriet Westbrook and something in her face reminded him of Harriet Grove; it is even still uncertain to which Harriet the dedication of Queen Mab is addressed. (See Medwin, volume 1 page 68.)

In his childhood Shelley scribbled verses with fluency by no means unusual in the case of forward boys; and we have seen that at Sion House he greedily devoured the sentimental novels of the day. His favourite poets at the time of which I am now writing, were Monk Lewis and Southey; his favourite books in prose were romances by Mrs. Radcliffe and Godwin. He now began to yearn for fame and publicity. Miss Shelley speaks of a play written by her brother and her sister Elizabeth, which was sent to Matthews the comedian, and courteously returned as unfit for acting. She also mentions a little volume of her own verses, which the boy had printed with the tell-tale name of "H-ll-n Sh-ll-y" on the title-page. Medwin gives a long account of a poem on the story of the Wandering Jew, composed by him in concert with Shelley during the winter of 1809-1810. They sent the

manuscript to Thomas Campbell, who returned it with the observation that it contained but two good lines: —

It seemed as if an angel's sigh
Had breathed the plaintive symphony.

Undeterred by this adverse criticism, Shelley subsequently offered "The Wandering Jew" to two publishers, Messrs. Ballantyne and Co. of Edinburgh, and Mr. Stockdale of Pall Mall; but it remained in MS. at Edinburgh till 1831, when a portion was printed in "Fraser's Magazine."

Just before leaving Eton he finished a novel of "Zastrozzi", which some critics trace to its source in "Zofloya the Moor," perused by him at Sion House. The most astonishing fact about this incoherent medley of mad sentiment is that it served to furnish forth the 40-pound Eton supper already spoken of, that it was duly ushered into the world of letters by Messrs. Wilkie and Robinson on the 5th of June, 1810, and that it was seriously reviewed. The dates of Shelley's publications now come fast and frequent. In the late summer of 1810 he introduced himself to Mr. J.J. Stockdale, the then fashionable publisher of poems and romances, at his house of business in Pall Mall. With characteristic impetuosity the young author implored assistance in a difficulty. He had commissioned a printer in Horsham to strike off the astounding number of 1480 copies of a volume of poems; and he had no money to pay the printer's bill. Would Stockdale help him out of this dilemma, by taking up the quires and duly ushering the book into the world? Throughout his life Shelley exercised a wonderful fascination over the people with whom he came in contact, and almost always won his way with them as much by personal charm as by determined and impassioned will. Accordingly on this occasion Stockdale proved accommodating. The Horsham printer was somehow satisfied; and on the 17th of September, 1810, the little book came out with the title of "Original Poetry, by Victor and Cazire." This volume has disappeared; and much fruitless conjecture has been expended upon the question of Shelley's collaborator in his juvenile attempt. Cazire stands for some one; probably it is meant to represent a woman's name, and that woman may have been either Elizabeth Shelley or Harriet Grove. The "Original Poetry" had only been launched a week, when Stockdale discovered on a closer inspection of the book that it contained some verses well known to the world as the production of M.G.

Lewis. He immediately communicated with Shelley, and the whole edition was suppressed — not, however, before about one hundred copies had passed into circulation. To which of the collaborators this daring act of petty larceny was due, we know not; but we may be sure that Shelley satisfied Stockdale on the point of piracy, since the publisher saw no reason to break with him. On the 14th of November in the same year he issued Shelley's second novel from his press, and entered into negotiations with him for the publication of more poetry. The new romance was named "St. Irvyne, or the Rosicrucian." This tale, no less unreadable than "Zastrozzi," and even more chaotic in its plan, contained a good deal of poetry, which has been incorporated in the most recent editions of Shelley's works. A certain interest attaches to it as the first known link between Shelley and William Godwin, for it was composed under the influence of the latter's novel, "St. Leon." The title, moreover, carries us back to those moonlight walks with Harriet Grove alluded to above. Shelley's earliest attempts in literature have but little value for the student of poetry, except in so far as they illustrate the psychology of genius and its wayward growth. Their intrinsic merit is almost less than nothing, and no one could predict from their perusal the course which the future poet of "The Cenci" and "Epipsychidion" was to take. It might indeed be argued that the defects of his great qualities, the over-ideality, the haste, the incoherence, and the want of grasp on narrative, are glaringly apparent in these early works. But while this is true, the qualities themselves are absent. A cautious critic will only find food in "Zastrozzi" and "St. Irvyne" for wondering how such flowers and fruits of genius could have lain concealed within a germ apparently so barren. There is even less of the real Shelley discernible in these productions, than of the real Byron in the "Hours of Idleness."

In the Michaelmas Term of 1810 Shelley was matriculated as a Commoner of University College, Oxford; and very soon after his arrival he made the acquaintance of a man who was destined to play a prominent part in his subsequent history, and to bequeath to posterity the most brilliant, if not in all respects the most trustworthy, record of his marvellous youth. Thomas Jefferson Hogg was unlike Shelley in temperament and tastes. His feet were always planted on the earth, while Shelley flew aloft to heaven with singing robes around him, or the mantel of the prophet on his shoulders. (He told Trelawny that he had been attracted to Shelley simply by his "rare talents as a scholar;" and Trelawny has recorded his opinion

that Hogg's portrait of their friend was faithful, in spite of a total want of sympathy with his poetic genius. This testimony is extremely valuable.) Hogg had much of the cynic in his nature; he was a shrewd man of the world, and a caustic humorist. Positive and practical, he chose the beaten path of life, rose to eminence as a lawyer, and cherished the Church and State opinions of a staunch Tory. Yet, though he differed so essentially from the divine poet, he understood the greatness of Shelley at a glance, and preserved for us a record of his friend's early days, which is incomparable for the vividness of its portraiture. The pages which narrate Shelley's course of life at Oxford have all the charm of a romance. No novel indeed is half so delightful as that picture, at once affectionate and satirical, tender and humorous, extravagant and delicately shaded, of the student life enjoyed together for a few short months by the inseparable friends. To make extracts from a masterpiece of such consummate workmanship is almost painful. Future biographers of Shelley, writing on a scale adequate to the greatness of their subject, will be content to lay their pens down for a season at this point, and let Hogg tell the tale in his own wayward but inimitable fashion. I must confine myself to a few quotations and a barren abstract, referring my readers to the ever-memorable pages 48 — 286 of Hogg's first volume, for the life that cannot be transferred to these.

"At the commencement of Michaelmas term," says this biographer, "that is, at the end of October, in the year 1810, I happened one day to sit next to a freshman at dinner; it was his first appearance in hall. His figure was slight, and his aspect remarkably youthful, even at our table, where all were very young. He seemed thoughtful and absent. He ate little, and had no acquaintance with any one." The two young men began a conversation, which turned upon the respective merits of German and Italian poetry, a subject they neither of them knew anything about. After dinner it was continued in Hogg's rooms, where Shelley soon led the talk to his favourite topic of science. "As I felt, in truth, but a slight interest in the subject of his conversation, I had leisure to examine, and I may add, to admire, the appearance of my very extraordinary guest. It was a sum of many contradictions. His figure was slight and fragile, and yet his bones and joints were large and strong. He was tall, but he stooped so much, that he seemed of a low stature. His clothes were expensive, and made according to the most approved mode of the day; but they were tumbled, rumpled, unbrushed. His gestures were abrupt, and sometimes violent, occasionally

even awkward, yet more frequently gentle and graceful. His complexion was delicate and almost feminine, of the purest red and white; yet he was tanned and freckled by exposure to the sun, having passed the autumn, as he said, in shooting. His features, his whole face, and particularly his head, were, in fact, unusually small; yet the last APPEARED of a remarkable bulk, for his hair was long and bushy, and in fits of absence, and in the agonies (if I may use the word) of anxious thought, he often rubbed it fiercely with his hands, or passed his fingers quickly through his locks unconsciously, so that it was singularly wild and rough. In times when it was the mode to imitate stage-coachmen as closely as possible in costume, and when the hair was invariably cropped, like that of our soldiers, this eccentricity was very striking. His features were not symmetrical (the mouth, perhaps, excepted), yet was the effect of the whole extremely powerful. They breathed an animation, a fire, an enthusiasm, a vivid and preternatural intelligence, that I never met with in any other countenance. Nor was the moral expression less beautiful than the intellectual; for there was a softness, a delicacy, a gentleness, and especially (though this will surprise many) that air of profound religious veneration, that characterizes the best works, and chiefly the frescoes (and into these they infused their whole souls), of the great masters of Florence and of Rome. I recognized the very peculiar expression in these wonderful productions long afterwards, and with a satisfaction mingled with much sorrow, for it was after the decease of him in whose countenance I had first observed it."

In another place Hogg gives some details which complete the impression of Shelley's personal appearance, and which are fully corroborated by Trelawny's recollections of a later date. "There were many striking contrasts in the character and behaviour of Shelley, and one of the most remarkable was a mixture, or alternation, of awkwardness with agility — of the clumsy with the graceful. He would stumble in stepping across the floor of a drawing room; he would trip himself up on a smooth-shaven grass-plot, and he would tumble in the most inconceivable manner in ascending the commodious, facile, and well-carpeted staircase of an elegant mansion, so as to bruise his nose or his lip on the upper steps, or to tread upon his hands, and even occasionally to disturb the composure of a well-bred footman; on the contrary, he would often glide without collision through a crowded assembly, thread with unerring dexterity a most intricate path, or securely and rapidly tread the most arduous and uncertain ways."

This word-portrait corresponds in its main details to the descriptions furnished by other biographers, who had the privilege of Shelley's friendship. His eyes were blue, unfathomably dark and lustrous. His hair was brown; but very early in life it became grey, while his unwrinkled face retained to the last a look of wonderful youth. It is admitted on all sides that no adequate picture was ever painted of him. Mulready is reported to have said that he was too beautiful to paint. And yet, although so singularly lovely, he owed less of his charm to regularity of feature or to grace of movement, than to an indescribable personal fascination. One further detail Hogg pointedly insists upon. Shelley's voice "was excruciating; it was intolerably shrill, harsh and discordant." This is strongly stated; but, though the terms are certainly exaggerated, I believe that we must trust this first impression made on Shelley's friend. There is a considerable mass of convergent testimony to the fact that Shelley's voice was high pitched, and that when he became excited, he raised it to a scream. The epithets "shrill," "piercing," "penetrating," frequently recur in the descriptions given of it. At the same time its quality seems to have been less dissonant than thrilling; there is abundance of evidence to prove that he could modulate it exquisitely in the reading of poetry, and its tone proved no obstacle to the persuasive charms of his eloquence in conversation. Like all finely tempered natures, he vibrated in harmony with the subjects of his thought. Excitement made his utterance shrill and sharp. Deep feeling of the sense of beauty lowered its tone to richness; but the timbre was always acute, in sympathy with his intense temperament. All was of one piece in Shelley's nature. This peculiar voice, varying from moment to moment, and affecting different sensibilities in divers ways, corresponds to the high-strung passion of his life, his fine-drawn and ethereal fancies, and the clear vibrations of his palpitating verse. Such a voice, far-reaching, penetrating, and unearthly, befitted one who lived in rarest ether on the topmost heights of human thought.

The acquaintance begun that October evening soon ripened into close friendship. Shelley and Hogg from this time forward spent a large part of their days and nights together in common studies, walks and conversations. It was their habit to pass the morning, each in his own rooms, absorbed in private reading. At one o'clock they met and lunched, and then started for long rambles in the country. Shelley frequently carried pistols with him upon these occasions, and would stop to fix his father's franks upon

convenient trees and shoot at them. The practice of pistol shooting, adopted so early in life, was afterwards one of his favourite amusements in the company of Byron. Hogg says that in his use of fire-arms he was extraordinarily careless. “How often have I lamented that Nature, which so rarely bestows upon the world a creature endowed with such marvellous talents, ungraciously rendered the gift less precious by implanting a fatal taste for perilous recreations, and a thoughtlessness in the pursuit of them, that often caused his existence from one day to another to seem in itself miraculous.” On their return from these excursions the two friends, neither of whom cared for dining in the College Hall, drank tea and supped together, Shelley’s rooms being generally chosen as the scene of their symposia.

These rooms are described as a perfect palace of confusion — chaos on chaos heaped of chemical apparatus, books, electrical machines, unfinished manuscripts, and furniture worn into holes by acids. It was perilous to use the poet’s drinking-vessels, less perchance a seven-shilling piece half dissolved in aqua regia should lurk at the bottom of the bowl. Handsome razors were used to cut the lids of wooden boxes, and valuable books served to support lamps or crucibles; for in his vehement precipitation Shelley always laid violent hands on what he found convenient to the purpose of the moment. Here the friends talked and read until late in the night. Their chief studies at this time were in Locke and Hume and the French essayists. Shelley’s bias toward metaphysical speculation was beginning to assert itself. He read the School Logic with avidity, and practised himself without intermission in dialectical discussion. Hogg observes, what is confirmed by other testimony, that in reasoning Shelley never lost sight of the essential bearings of the topic in dispute, never condescended to personal or captious arguments, and was Socratically bent on following the dialogue wherever it might lead, without regard for consequences. Plato was another of their favourite authors; but Hogg expressly tells us that they only approached the divine philosopher through the medium of translations. It was not until a later period that Shelley studied his dialogues in the original: but the substance of them, seen through Mdme. Dacier’s version, acted powerfully on the poet’s sympathetic intellect. In fact, although at the time he had adopted the conclusions of materialism, he was at heart all through his life an idealist. Therefore the mixture of the poet and the sage in Plato fascinated him. The doctrine of anamnesis, which offers so strange a vista

to speculative reverie, by its suggestion of an earlier existence in which our knowledge was acquired, took a strong hold upon his imagination; he would stop in the streets to gaze wistfully at babies, wondering whether their newly imprisoned souls were not replete with the wisdom stored up in a previous life.

In the acquisition of knowledge he was then as ever unrelaxing. "No student ever read more assiduously. He was to be found, book in hand, at all hours; reading in season and out of season; at table, in bed, and especially during a walk; not only in the quiet country, and in retired paths; not only at Oxford, in the public walks, and High Street, but in the most crowded thoroughfares of London. Nor was he less absorbed by the volume that was open before him, in Cheapside, in Cranbourne Alley, or in Bond Street, than in a lonely lane, or a secluded library. Sometimes a vulgar fellow would attempt to insult or annoy the eccentric student in passing. Shelley always avoided the malignant interruption by stepping aside with his vast and quiet agility." And again:—"I never beheld eyes that devoured the pages more voraciously than his; I am convinced that two-thirds of the period of the day and night were often employed in reading. It is no exaggeration to affirm, that out of twenty-four hours, he frequently read sixteen. At Oxford, his diligence in this respect was exemplary, but it greatly increased afterwards, and I sometimes thought that he carried it to a pernicious excess: I am sure, at least, that I was unable to keep pace with him." With Shelley study was a passion, and the acquisition of knowledge was the entrance into a thrice-hallowed sanctuary. "The irreverent many cannot comprehend the awe — the careless apathetic worldling cannot imagine the enthusiasm — nor can the tongue that attempts only to speak of things visible to the bodily eye, express the mighty emotion that inwardly agitated him, when he approached, for the first time, a volume which he believed to be replete with the recondite and mystic philosophy of antiquity: his cheeks glowed, his eyes became bright, his whole frame trembled, and his entire attention was immediately swallowed up in the depths of contemplation. The rapid and vigorous conversion of his soul to intellect can only be compared with the instantaneous ignition and combustion, which dazzle the sight, when a bundle of dry reeds, or other light inflammable substance, is thrown upon a fire already rich with accumulated heat."

As at Eton, so at Oxford, Shelley refused to keep the beaten track of prescribed studies, or to run in ordinary grooves of thought. The mere fact

that Aristotle was a duty, seems to have disgusted him with the author of the Organon, from whom, had his works been prohibited to undergraduates, he would probably have been eager to learn much. For mathematics and jurisprudence he evinced a marked distaste. The common business of the English Parliament had no attraction for him, and he read few newspapers. While his mind was keenly interested in great political questions, he could not endure the trivial treatment of them in the daily press, and cared far more for principles than for the incidents of party warfare. Here again he showed that impatience of detail, and that audacity of self-reliant genius, which were the source of both his weakness and his strength. He used to speak with aversion of a Parliamentary career, and told Hogg that though this had been suggested to him, as befitting his position, by the Duke of Norfolk, he could never bring himself to mix with the rabble of the House. It is none the less true, however, that he entertained some vague notion of eventually succeeding to his father's seat.

Combined with his eager intellectual activity, there was something intermittent and fitful in the working of his mental faculties. Hogg, in particular, mentions one of his habits in a famous passage, which, since it brings the two friends vividly before us, may here be quoted. "I was enable to continue my studies afterwards in the evening, in consequence of a very remarkable peculiarity. My young and energetic friend was then overcome by extreme drowsiness, which speedily and completely vanquished him; he would sleep from two to four hours, often so soundly that his slumbers resembled a deep lethargy; he lay occasionally upon the sofa, but more commonly stretched upon the rug before a large fire, like a cat; and his little round head was exposed to such a fierce heat, that I used to wonder how he was able to bear it. Sometimes I have interposed some shelter, but rarely with any permanent effect; for the sleeper usually contrived to turn himself, and to roll again into the spot where the fire glowed the brightest. His torpor was generally profound, but he would sometimes discourse incoherently for a long while in his sleep. At six he would suddenly compose himself, even in the midst of a most animated narrative, or of earnest discussion; and he would lie buried in entire forgetfulness, in a sweet and mighty oblivion, until ten, when he would suddenly start up, and, rubbing his eyes with great violence, and passing his fingers swiftly through his long hair, would enter at once into a vehement argument, or begin to recite verses, either of his

own composition or from the works of others, with a rapidity and an energy that were often quite painful."

Shelley's moral qualities are described with no less enthusiasm than his intellectual and physical beauty by the friend from whom I have already drawn so largely. Love was the root and basis of his nature: this love, first developed as domestic affection, next as friendship, then as a youth's passion, now began to shine with steady lustre as an all-embracing devotion to his fellow-men. There is something inevitably chilling in the words "benevolence" and "philanthropy." A disillusioned world is inclined to look with languid approbation on the former, and to disbelieve in the latter. Therefore I will not use them to describe that intense and glowing passion of unselfishness, which throughout his life led Shelley to find his strongest interests in the joys and sorrows of his fellow-creatures, which inflamed his imagination with visions of humanity made perfect, and which filled his days with sweet deeds of unnumbered charities. I will rather collect from the page of his friend's biography a few passages recording the first impression of his character, the memory of which may be carried by the reader through the following brief record of his singular career: —

"His speculations were as wild as the experience of twenty-one years has shown them to be; but the zealous earnestness for the augmentation of knowledge, and the glowing philanthropy and boundless benevolence that marked them, and beamed forth in the whole deportment of that extraordinary boy, are not less astonishing than they would have been if the whole of his glorious anticipations had been prophetic; for these high qualities, at least, I have never found a parallel."

"In no individual perhaps was the moral sense ever more completely developed than in Shelley; in no being was the perception of right and of wrong more acute.

"As his love of intellectual pursuits was vehement, and the vigour of his genius almost celestial, so were the purity and sanctity of his life most conspicuous."

"I never knew any one so prone to admire as he was, in whom the principle of veneration was so strong."

"I have had the happiness to associate with some of the best specimens of gentlemen; but with all due deference for those admirable persons (may my candour and my preference be pardoned), I can affirm that Shelley was almost the only example I have yet found that was never wanting, even in

the most minute particular, of the infinite and various observances of pure, entire, and perfect gentility."

"Shelley was actually offended, and indeed more indignant than would appear to be consistent with the singular mildness of his nature, at a coarse and awkward jest, especially if it were immodest, or uncleanly; in the latter case his anger was unbounded, and his uneasiness pre-eminent; he was, however, sometimes vehemently delighted by exquisite and delicate sallies, particularly with a fanciful, and perhaps somewhat fantastical facetiousness — possibly the more because he was himself utterly incapable of pleasantry."

"I could never discern in him any more than two fixed principles. The first was a strong irrepressible love of liberty; of liberty in the abstract, and somewhat after the pattern of the ancient republics, without reference to the English constitution, respecting which he knew little and cared nothing, heeding it not at all. The second was an equally ardent love of toleration of all opinions, but more especially of religious opinions; of toleration, complete, entire, universal, unlimited; and, as a deduction and corollary from which latter principle, he felt an intense abhorrence of persecution of every kind, public or private."

The testimony in the foregoing extracts as to Shelley's purity and elevation of moral character is all the stronger, because it is given by a man not over-inclined to praise, and of a temperament as unlike the poet's as possible. If we were to look only upon this side of his portrait, we should indeed be almost forced to use the language of his most enthusiastic worshippers, and call him an archangel. But it must be admitted that, though so pure and gentle and exalted, Shelley's virtues were marred by his eccentricity, by something at times approaching madness, which paralyzed his efficiency by placing him in a glaringly false relation to some of the best men in the world around him. He possessed certain good qualities in excess; for, though it sounds paradoxical, it is none the less true that a man may be too tolerant, too fond of liberty: and it was precisely the extravagance of these virtues in Shelley which drove him into acts and utterances so antagonistic to society as to be intolerable.

Of Shelley's poetical studies we hear but little at this epoch. His genius by a stretch of fancy might be compared to one of those double stars which dart blue and red rays of light: for it was governed by two luminaries, poetry and metaphysics; and at this time the latter seems to have been in the

ascendant. It is, however, interesting to learn that he read and re-read Landor's "Gebir" — stronger meat than either Southey's epics or the ghost-lyrics of Monk Lewis. Hogg found him one day busily engaged in correcting proofs of some original poems. Shelley asked his friend what he thought of them, and Hogg answered that it might be possible by a little alteration to turn them into capital burlesques. The idea took the young poet's fancy; and the friends between them soon effected a metamorphosis in Shelley's serious verses, by which they became unmistakably ridiculous. Having achieved their purpose, they now bethought them of the proper means of publication. Upon whom should the poems, a medley of tyrannicide and revolutionary raving, be fathered? Peg Nicholson, a mad washerwoman, had recently attempted George the Third's life with a carving-knife. No more fitting author could be found. They would give their pamphlet to the world as her work, edited by an admiring nephew. The printer appreciated the joke no less than the authors of it. He provided splendid paper and magnificent type; and before long the book of nonsense was in the hands of Oxford readers. It sold for the high price of half-a-crown a copy; and, what is hardly credible, the gownsmen received it as a genuine production. "It was indeed a kind of fashion to be seen reading it in public, as a mark of nice discernment, of a delicate and fastidious taste in poetry, and the best criterion of a choice spirit." Such was the genesis of "Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson", edited by John Fitz Victor. The name of the supposititious nephew reminds us of "Original Poems" by Victor and Cazire, and raises the question whether the poems in that lost volume may not have partly furnished forth this Oxford travesty.

Shelley's next publication, or quasi-publication, was neither so innocent in substance nor so pleasant in its consequences. After leaving Eton, he continued the habit, learned from Dr. Lind, of corresponding with distinguished persons whom he did not personally know. Thus we find him about this time addressing Miss Felicia Browne (afterwards Mrs. Hemans) and Leigh Hunt. He plied his correspondents with all kinds of questions; and as the dialectical interest was uppermost at Oxford, he now endeavoured to engage them in discussions on philosophical and religious topics. We have seen that his favourite authors were Locke, Hume, and the French materialists. With the impulsiveness peculiar to his nature, he adopted the negative conclusions of a shallow nominalistic philosophy. It was a fundamental point with him to regard all questions, however sifted

and settled by the wise of former ages, as still open; and in his inordinate thirst for liberty, he rejoiced to be the Deicide of a pernicious theological delusion. In other words, he passed at Oxford by one leap from a state of indifferentism with regard to Christianity, into an attitude of vehement antagonism. With a view to securing answers to his missives, he printed a short abstract of Hume's and other arguments against the existence of a Deity, presented in a series of propositions, and signed with a mathematically important "Q.E.D." This document he forwarded to his proposed antagonists, expressing his inability to answer its arguments, and politely requesting them to help him. When it so happened that any incautious correspondents acceded to this appeal, Shelley fell with merciless severity upon their feeble and commonplace reasoning. The little pamphlet of two pages was entitled "The Necessity of Atheism"; and its proposed publication, beyond the limits of private circulation already described, is proved by an advertisement (February 9, 1811) in the "Oxford University and City Herald". It was not, however, actually offered for sale.

A copy of this syllabus reached a Fellow of another college, who made the Master of the University acquainted with the fact. On the morning of March 25, 1811, Shelley was sent for to the Senior Common Room, and asked whether he acknowledged himself to be the author of the obnoxious pamphlet. On his refusal to answer this question, he was served with a formal sentence of expulsion duly drawn up and sealed. The college authorities have been blamed for unfair dealing in this matter. It is urged that they ought to have proceeded by the legal method of calling witnesses; and that the sentence was not only out of all proportion to the offence, but that it ought not to have been executed till persuasion had been tried. With regard to the former indictment, I do not think that a young man still in statu pupillari, who refused to purge himself of what he must have known to be a serious charge, had any reason to expect from his tutors the formalities of an English court of law. There is no doubt that the Fellows were satisfied of his being the real author; else they could not have ventured on so summary a measure as expulsion. Their question was probably intended to give the culprit an occasion for apology, of which they foresaw he would not avail himself. With regard to the second, it is true that Shelley was amenable to kindness, and that gentle and wise treatment from men whom he respected might possibly have brought him to retract his syllabus. But it must be remembered that he despised the Oxford dons with all his heart; and they

were probably aware of this. He was a dexterous, impassioned reasoner, whom they little cared to encounter in argument on such a topic. During his short period of residence, moreover, he had not shown himself so tractable as to secure the good wishes of superiors, who prefer conformity to incommensurable genius. It is likely that they were not averse to getting rid of him as a man dangerous to the peace of their society; and now they had a good occasion. Nor was it to be expected that the champion and apostle of Atheism — and Shelley was certainly both, in spite of Hogg's attempts to tone down the purpose of his document — should be unmolested in his propaganda by the aspirants to fat livings and ecclesiastical dignities. Real blame, however, attaches to these men: first, for their dulness to discern Shelley's amiable qualities; and, secondly, for the prejudgment of the case implied in the immediate delivery of their sentence. Both Hogg and Shelley accused them, besides, of a gross brutality, which was, to say the least, unseemly on so serious an occasion. At the beginning of this century the learning and the manners of Oxford dons were at a low ebb; and the Fellows of University College acted harshly but not altogether unjustly, ignorantly but after their own kind, in this matter of Shelley's expulsion. $Non ragionem di lor, ma guarda e passa. Hogg, who stood by his friend manfully at this crisis, and dared the authorities to deal with him as they had dealt with Shelley, adding that they had just as much real proof to act upon in his case, and intimating his intention of returning the same answer as to the authorship of the pamphlet, was likewise expelled. The two friends left Oxford together by coach on the morning of the 26th of March.

Shelley felt his expulsion acutely. At Oxford he had enjoyed the opportunities of private reading which the University afforded in those days of sleepy studies and innocuous examinations. He delighted in the security of his "oak," and above all things he found pleasure in the society of his one chosen friend. He was now obliged to exchange these good things for the tumult and discomfort of London. His father, after clumsily attempting compromises, had forbidden his return to Field Place. The whole fabric of his former life was broken up. The last hope of renewing his engagement with his cousin had to be abandoned. His pecuniary position was precarious, and in a short time he was destined to lose the one friend who had so generously shared his fate. Yet the notion of recovering his position as a student in one of our great Universities, of softening his father's indignation, or of ameliorating his present circumstances by the least

concession, never seems to have occurred to him. He had suffered in the cause of truth and liberty, and he willingly accepted his martyrdom for conscience' sake.

CHAPTER 3. LIFE IN LONDON AND FIRST MARRIAGE.

It is of some importance at this point to trace the growth and analyse the substance of Shelley's atheistical opinions. The cardinal characteristic of his nature was an implacable antagonism to shams and conventions, which passed too easily into impatient rejection of established forms as worse than useless. Born in the stronghold of squirearchical prejudices, nursed amid the trivial platitudes that then passed in England for philosophy, his keen spirit flew to the opposite pole of thought with a recoil that carried him at first to inconsiderate negation. His passionate love of liberty, his loathing for intolerance, his impatience of control for self and others, and his vivid logical sincerity, combined to make him the Quixotic champion of extreme opinions. He was too fearless to be wise, too precipitate to suspend his judgment, too convinced of the paramount importance of iconoclasm, to mature his views in silence. With the unbounded audacity of youth, he hoped to take the fortresses of "Anarch Custom" by storm at the first assault. His favourite ideal was the vision of a youth, Laon or Lionel, whose eloquence had power to break the bonds of despotism, as the sun thaws ice upon an April morning. It was enough, he thought, to hurl the glove of defiance boldly at the tyrant's face — to sow the "Necessity of Atheism" broadcast on the bench of Bishops, and to depict incest in his poetry, not because he wished to defend it, but because society must learn to face the most abhorrent problems with impartiality. Gifted with a touch as unerring as Ithuriel's spear for the unmasking of hypocrisy, he strove to lay bare the very substance of the soul beneath the crust of dogma and the froth of traditional beliefs; nor does it seem to have occurred to him that, while he stripped the rags and patches that conceal the nakedness of ordinary human nature, he might drag away the weft and woof of nobler thought. In his poet-philosopher's imagination there bloomed a wealth of truth and love and beauty so abounding, that behind the mirage he destroyed, he saw no blank, but a new Eternal City of the Spirit. He never doubted whether his fellow-creatures were certain to be equally fortunate.

Shelley had no faculty for compromise, no perception of the blended truths and falsehoods through which the mind of man must gradually win its way from the obscurity of myths into the clearness of positive knowledge, for ever toiling and for ever foiled, and forced to content itself with the

increasing consciousness of limitations. Brimming over with love for men, he was deficient in sympathy with the conditions under which they actually think and feel. Could he but dethrone the Anarch Custom, the millennium, he argued, would immediately arrive; nor did he stop to think how different was the fibre of his own soul from that of the unnumbered multitudes around him. In his adoration of what he recognized as living, he retained no reverence for the ossified experience of past ages. The principle of evolution, which forms a saving link between the obsolete and the organically vital, had no place in his logic. The spirit of the French Revolution, uncompromising, shattering, eager to build in a day the structure which long centuries of growth must fashion, was still fresh upon him. We who have survived the enthusiasm of that epoch, who are exhausted with its passions, and who have suffered from its reactive impulses, can scarcely comprehend the vivid faith and young-eyed joy of aspiration which sustained Shelley in his flight toward the region of impossible ideals. For he had a vital faith; and this faith made the ideals he conceived seem possible — faith in the duty and desirability of overthrowing idols; faith in the gospel of liberty, fraternity, equality; faith in the divine beauty of nature; faith in a love that rules the universe; faith in the perfectibility of man; faith in the omnipresent soul, whereof our souls are atoms; faith in affection as the ruling and co-ordinating substance of morality. The man who lived by this faith was in no vulgar sense of the word an Atheist. When he proclaimed himself to be one, he pronounced his hatred of a gloomy religion, which had been the instrument of kings and priests for the enslavement of their fellow-creatures. As he told his friend Trelawny, he used the word Atheism “to express his abhorrence of superstition; he took it up as a knight took up a gauntlet, in defiance of injustice.” But Shelley believed too much to be consistently agnostic. He believed so firmly and intensely in his own religion — a kind of passionate positivism, a creed which seemed to have no God because it was all God — that he felt convinced he only needed to destroy accepted figments, for the light which blazed around him to break through and flood the world with beauty. Shelley can only be called an Atheist, in so far as he maintained the inadequacy of hitherto received conceptions of the Deity, and indignantly rejected that Moloch of cruelty who is worshipped in the debased forms of Christianity. He was an Agnostic only in so far as he proclaimed the impossibility of solving the insoluble, and knowing the unknowable. His

clear and fearless utterances upon these points place him in the rank of intellectual heroes. But his own soul, compact of human faith and love, was far too religious and too sanguine to merit either epithet as vulgarly applied.

The negative side of Shelley's creed had the moral value which attaches to all earnest conviction, plain speech, defiance of convention, and enthusiasm for intellectual liberty at any cost. It was marred, however, by extravagance, crudity, and presumption. Much that he would fain have destroyed because he found it customary, was solid, true, and beneficial. Much that he thought it desirable to substitute, was visionary, hollow, and pernicious. He lacked the touchstone of mature philosophy, whereby to separate the pinchbeck from the gold of social usage; and in his intense enthusiasm he lost his hold on common sense, which might have saved him from the puerility of arrogant iconoclasm. The positive side of his creed remains precious, not because it was logical, or scientific, or coherent, but because it was an ideal, fervently felt, and penetrated with the whole life-force of an incomparable nature. Such ideals are needed for sustaining man upon his path amid the glooms and shadows of impenetrable ignorance. The form the seal and pledge of his spiritual dignity, reminding him that he was not born to live like brutes, or like the brutes to perish without effort.

Fatti non foste a viver come bruti,
Ma per seguir virtude e conoscenza.

These criticisms apply to the speculations of Shelley's earlier life, when his crusade against accepted usage was extravagant, and his confidence in the efficacy of mere eloquence to change the world was overweening. The experience of years, however, taught him wisdom without damping his enthusiasm, refined the crudity of his first fervent speculations, and mellowed his philosophy. Had he lived to a ripe age, there is no saying with what clear and beneficent lustre might have shone that light of aspiration which during his turbid youth burned somewhat luridly, and veiled its radiance in the smoke of mere rebelliousness and contradiction.

Hogg and Shelley settled in lodgings at No. 15, Poland Street, soon after their arrival in London. The name attracted Shelley: "it reminded him of Thaddeus of Warsaw and of freedom." He was further fascinated by a gaudy wall-paper of vine-trellises and grapes, which adorned the parlour; and vowed that he would stay there for ever. "For ever," was a word often

upon Shelley's lips in the course of his chequered life; and yet few men have been subject to so many sudden changes through the buffetings of fortune from without and the inconstancy of their own purpose, than he was. His biographer has no little trouble to trace and note with accuracy his perpetual flittings and the names of his innumerable temporary residences. A month had not elapsed before Hogg left him in order to begin his own law studies at York; and Shelley abode "alone in the vine-trellised chamber, where he was to remain, a bright-eyed, restless fox amidst sour grapes, not, as his poetic imagination at first suggested, for ever, but a little while longer."

The records of this first residence in London are meagre, but not unimportant. We hear of negotiations and interviews with Mr. Timothy Shelley, all of which proved unavailing. Shelley would not recede from the position he had taken up. Nothing would induce him to break off his intimacy with Hogg, or to place himself under the tutor selected for him by his father. For Paley's, or as Mr. Shelley called him "Palley's," Evidences he expressed unbounded contempt. The breach between them gradually widened. Mr. Shelley at last determined to try the effect of cutting off supplies; but his son only hardened his heart, and sustained himself by a proud consciousness of martyrdom. I agree with Shelley's last and best biographer, Mr. W.M. Rossetti, in his condemnation of the poet's behaviour as a son. Shelley did not treat his father with the common consideration due from youth to age; and the only instances of unpardonable bad taste to be found in his correspondence or the notes of his conversation, are insulting phrases applied to a man who was really more unfortunate than criminal in his relations to this changeling from the realms of faery. It is not too much to say that his dislike of his father amounted to derangement; and certainly some of his suspicions with regard to him were the hallucinations of a heated fancy. How so just and gentle a nature was brought into so false a moral situation, whether by some sudden break-down of confidence in childhood or by a gradually increasing mistrust, is an interesting but perhaps insoluble problem. We only know that in his early boyhood Shelley loved his father so much as to have shown unusual emotion during his illness on one occasion, but that, while at Eton he had already become possessed by a dark suspicion concerning him. This is proved by the episode of Dr. Lind's visit during his fever. Then and ever afterwards he expected monstrous treatment at his hands, although the elder gentleman

was nothing worse than a muddle-headed squire. It has more than once occurred to me that this fever may have been a turning point in his history, and that a delusion, engendered by delirium, may have fixed itself upon his mind, owing to some imperfection in the process of recovery. But the theory is too speculative and unsupported by proof to be more than passingly alluded to.

At this time Shelley found it difficult to pay his lodgings and to buy food. It is said that his sisters saved their pocket-money to support him: and we know that he paid them frequent visits at their school on Clapham Common. It was here that his characteristic hatred of tyranny displayed itself on two occasions. "One day," writes Miss Hellen Shelley, "his ire was greatly excited at a black mark hung round one of our throats, as a penalty for some small misdemeanour. He expressed great disapprobation, more of the system than that one of his sisters should be so punished. Another time he found me, I think, in an iron collar, which certainly was a dreadful instrument of torture in my opinion. It was not worn as a punishment, but because I POKED; but Bysshe declared that it would make me grow crooked, and ought to be discontinued immediately." The acquaintance which he now made with one of his sister's school friends was destined to lead to most important results. (It is probable that he saw her for the first time in January, 1811.) Harriet Westbrook was a girl of sixteen years, remarkably good-looking, with a brilliant pink and white complexion, beautiful brown hair, a pleasant voice, and a cheerful temper. She was the daughter of a man who kept a coffee-house in Mount Street, nick-named "Jew" Westbrook, because of his appearance. She had an elder sister, called Eliza, dark of complexion, and gaunt of figure, with the abundant hair that plays so prominent a part in Hogg's relentless portrait. Eliza, being nearly twice as old as Harriet, stood in the relation of a mother to her. Both of these young ladies, and the "Jew" their father, welcomed Shelley with distinguished kindness. Though he was penniless for the nonce, exiled from his home, and under the ban of his family's displeasure, he was still the heir to a large landed fortune and a baronetcy. It was not to be expected that the coffee-house people should look upon him with disfavour.

Shelley paid Harriet frequent visits, both at Mrs. Fenning's school and at Mount Street, and soon began a correspondence with her, hoping, as he expressly stated in a letter of a later date, by converting her to his theories, to add his sister and her "to the list of the good, the disinterested and the

free." At first she seems to have been horrified at the opinions he expressed; but in this case at least he did not overrate the powers of eloquence. With all the earnestness of an evangelist, he preached his gospel of freethought or atheism, and had the satisfaction of forming his young pupil to his views. He does not seem to have felt any serious inclination for Harriet; but in the absence of other friends, he gladly availed himself of her society. Gradually she became more interesting to him, when he heard mysterious accounts of suffering at home and tyranny at school. This was enough to rouse in Shelley the spirit of Quixotic championship, if not to sow the seeds of love. What Harriet's ill-treatment really was, no one has been able to discover; yet she used to affirm that her life at this time was so irksome that she contemplated suicide.

During the summer of 1811, Shelley's movements were more than usually erratic, and his mind was in a state of extraordinary restlessness. In the month of May, a kind of accommodation was come to with his father. He received permission to revisit Field Place, and had an allowance made him of 200 pounds a year. His uncle, Captain Pilfold of Cuckfield, was instrumental in effecting this partial reconciliation. Shelley spent some time at his uncle's country house, oscillating between London, Cuckfield, and Field Place, with characteristic rapidity, and paying one flying visit to his cousin Grove at Cwm Elan, near Rhayader, in North Wales. This visit is worth mention, since he now for the first time saw the scenery of waterfalls and mountains. He was, however, too much preoccupied to take much interest in nature. He was divided between his old affection for Miss Grove, his new but somewhat languid interest in Harriet, and a dearly cherished scheme for bringing about a marriage between his sister Elizabeth and his friend Hogg. The letters written to Hogg at this period (volume 1 pages 387-418) are exceedingly important and interesting, revealing as they do the perturbation of his feelings and the almost morbid excitement of his mind. But they are unluckily so badly edited, whether designedly or by accident, that it would be dangerous to draw minute conclusions from them. As they stand, they raise injurious suspicions, which can only be set at rest by a proper assignment of dates and explanation.

Meanwhile his destiny was shaping itself with a rapidity that plunged him suddenly into decisive and irrevocable action. It is of the greatest moment to ascertain precisely what his feelings were during this summer with regard to Harriet. Hogg has printed two letters in immediate

juxtaposition: the first without date, the second with the post-mark of Rhayader. Shelley ends the first epistle thus: “Your jokes on Harriet Westbrook amuse me: it is a common error for people to fancy others in their own situation, but if I know anything about love, I am NOT in love. I have heard from the Westbrooks, both of whom I highly esteem.” He begins the second with these words: “You will perhaps see me before you can answer this; perhaps not; heaven knows! I shall certainly come to York, but HARRIET WESTBROOK will decide whether now or in three weeks. Her father has persecuted her in a most horrible way, by endeavouring to compel her to go to school. She asked my advice: resistance was the answer, at the same time that I essayed to mollify Mr. W. in vain! And in consequence of my advice SHE has thrown herself upon MY protection. I set off for London on Monday. How flattering a distinction! — I am thinking of ten million things at once. What have I said? I declare, quite LUDICROUS. I advised her to resist. She wrote to say that resistance was useless, but that she would fly with me, and threw herself upon my protection. We shall have 200 pounds a year; when we find it run short, we must live, I suppose, upon love! Gratitude and admiration, all demand that I should love her FOR EVER. We shall see you at York. I will hear your arguments for matrimonialism, by which I am now almost convinced. I can get lodgings at York, I suppose. Direct to me at Graham’s, 18 Sackville Street, Piccadilly.” From a letter recently published by Mr. W.M. Rossetti (the University Magazine, February 1878), we further learn that Harriet, having fallen violently in love with her preceptor, had avowed her passion and flung herself into his arms.

It is clear from these documents, first, that Shelley was not deeply in love with Harriet when he eloped with her; secondly, that he was not prepared for the step; thirdly, that she induced him to take it; and fourthly, that he took it under a strong impression of her having been ill-treated. She had appealed to his most powerful passion, the hatred of tyranny. She had excited his admiration by setting conventions at defiance, and showing her readiness to be his mistress. Her confidence called forth his gratitude. Her choice of him for a protector flattered him: and, moreover, she had acted on his advice to carry resistance a outrance. There are many good Shelleyan reasons why he should elope with Harriet; but among them all I do not find that spontaneous and unsophisticated feeling, which is the substance of enduring love.

In the same series of letters, so incoherently jumbled together by Hogg's carelessness or caprice, Shelley more than once expresses the utmost horror of matrimony. Yet we now find him upon the verge of contracting marriage with a woman whom he did not passionately love, and who had offered herself unreservedly to him. It is worth pausing to observe that even Shelley, fearless and uncompromising as he was in conduct, could not at this crisis practise the principles he so eloquently impressed on others. Yet the point of weakness was honourable. It lay in his respect for women in general, and in his tender chivalry for the one woman who had cast herself upon his generosity. (See Shelley's third letter to Godwin (Hogg 2 page 63) for another defence of his conduct. "We agreed," etc.)

"My unfortunate friend Harriet," he writes under date August 15, 1811, from London, whether he had hurried to arrange the affairs of his elopement, "is yet undecided; not with respect to me, but to herself. How much, my dear friend, have I to tell you. In my leisure moments for thought, which since I wrote have been few, I have considered the important point on which you reprobated my hasty decision. The ties of love and honour are doubtless of sufficient strength to bind congenial souls — they are doubtless indissoluble, but by the brutish force of power; they are delicate and satisfactory. Yet the arguments of impracticability, and what is even worse, the disproportionate sacrifice which the female is called upon to make — these arguments, which you have urged in a manner immediately irresistible, I cannot withstand. Not that I suppose it to be likely that *I* shall directly be called upon to evince my attachment to either theory. I am become a perfect convert to matrimony, not from temporizing, but from YOUR arguments; nor, much as I wish to emulate your virtues and liken myself to you, do I regret the prejudices of anti-matrimonialism from your example or assertion. No. The ONE argument, which you have urged so often with so much energy; the sacrifice made by the woman, so disproportioned to any which the man can give — this alone may exculpate me, were it a fault, from uninquiring submission to your superior intellect."

Whether Shelley from his own peculiar point of view was morally justified in twice marrying, is a question of casuistry which has often haunted me. The reasons he alleged in extenuation of his conduct with regard to Harriet prove the goodness of his heart, his openness to argument, and the delicacy of his unselfishness. But they do not square with his expressed code of conduct; nor is it easy to understand how, having found it

needful to submit to custom, for his partner's sake, he should have gone on denouncing an institution which he recognized in his own practice. The conclusion seems to be that, though he despised accepted usage, and would fain have fashioned the world afresh to suit his heart's desire, the instincts of a loyal gentleman and his practical good sense were stronger than his theories.

A letter from Shelley's cousin, Mr. C.H. Grove, gives the details of Harriet's elopement. "When Bysshe finally came to town to elope with Miss Westbrook, he came as usual to Lincoln's Inn Fields, and I was his companion on his visits to her, and finally accompanied them early one morning — I forget now the month, or the date, but it might have been September — in a hackney coach to the Green Dragon, in Gracechurch Street, where we remained all day, till the hour when the mail-coaches start, when they departed in the northern mail for York." From York the young couple made their way at once to Edinburgh, where they were married according to the formalities of the Scotch law.

Shelley had now committed that greatest of social crimes in his father's eyes — a mesalliance. Supplies and communications were at once cut off from the prodigal; and it appears that Harriet and he were mainly dependent upon the generosity of Captain Pilfold for subsistence. Even Jew Westbrook, much as he may have rejoiced at seeing his daughter wedded to the heir of several thousands a year, buttoned up his pockets, either because he thought it well to play the part of an injured parent, or because he was not certain about Shelley's expectations. He afterwards made the Shelleys an allowance of 200 pounds a year, and early in 1812 Shelley says that he is in receipt of twice that income. Whence we may conclude that both fathers before long relented to the extent of the sum above mentioned.

In spite of temporary impecuniosity, the young people lived happily enough in excellent lodgings in George Street. Hogg, who joined them early in September, has drawn a lively picture of their domesticity. Much of the day was spent in reading aloud; for Harriet, who had a fine voice and excellent lungs, was never happy unless she was allowed to read and comment on her favourite authors. Shelley sometimes fell asleep during the performance of these rites; but when he woke refreshed with slumber, he was no less ready than at Oxford to support philosophical paradoxes with impassioned and persuasive eloquence. He began to teach Harriet Latin, set her to work upon the translation of a French story by Madame Cottin, and

for his own part executed a version of one of Buffon's treatises. The sitting-room was full of books. It was one of Shelley's peculiarities to buy books wherever he went, regardless of their volume or their cost. These he was wont to leave behind, when the moment arrived for a sudden departure from his temporary abode; so that, as Hogg remarks, a fine library might have been formed from the waifs and strays of his collections scattered over the three kingdoms. This quiet course of life was diversified by short rambles in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, and by many episodes related with Hogg's caustic humour. On the whole, the impression left upon the reader's mind is that Shelley and Harriet were very happy together at this period, and that Harriet was a charming and sweet-tempered girl, somewhat too much given to the study of trite ethics, and slightly deficient in sensibility, but otherwise a fit and soothing companion for the poet.

They were not, however, content to remain in Edinburgh. Hogg was obliged to leave that city, in order to resume his law studies at York, and Shelley's programme of life at this period imperatively required the society of his chosen comrade. It was therefore decided that the three friends should settle at York, to remain "for ever" in each other's company. They started in a post-chaise, the good Harriet reading aloud novels by the now forgotten Holcroft with untiring energy, to charm the tedium of the journey. At York more than one cloud obscured their triune felicity. In the first place they were unfortunate in their choice of lodgings. In the second Shelley found himself obliged to take an expensive journey to London, in the fruitless attempt to come to some terms with his father's lawyer, Mr. Whitton. Mr. Timothy Shelley was anxious to bind his erratic son down to a settlement of the estates, which, on his own death, would pass into the poet's absolute control. He suggested numerous arrangements; and not long after the date of Shelley's residence in York, he proposed to make him an immediate allowance of 2000 pounds, if Shelley would but consent to entail the land on his heirs male. This offer was indignantly refused. Shelley recognized the truth that property is a trust far more than a possession, and would do nothing to tie up so much command over labour, such incalculable potentialities of social good or evil, for an unborn being of whose opinions he knew nothing. This is only one among many instances of his readiness to sacrifice ease, comfort, nay, the bare necessities of life, for principle.

On his return to York, Shelley found a new inmate established in their lodgings. The incomparable Eliza, who was henceforth doomed to guide his

destinies to an obscure catastrophe, had arrived from London. Harriet believed her sister to be a paragon of beauty, good sense, and propriety. She obeyed her elder sister like a mother; never questioned her wisdom; and foolishly allowed her to interpose between herself and her husband. Hogg had been told before her first appearance in the friendly circle that Eliza was "beautiful, exquisitely beautiful; an elegant figure, full of grace; her face was lovely, — dark, bright eyes; jet-black hair, glossy; a crop upon which she bestowed the care it merited, — almost all her time; and she was so sensible, so amiable, so good!" Now let us listen to the account he has himself transmitted of this woman, whom certainly he did not love, and to whom poor Shelley had afterwards but little reason to feel gratitude. "She was older than I had expected, and she looked much older than she was. The lovely face was seamed with the smallpox, and of a dead white, as faces so much marked and scarred commonly are; as white indeed as a mass of boiled rice, but of a dingy hue, like rice boiled in dirty water. The eyes were dark, but dull, and without meaning; the hair was black and glossy, but coarse; and there was the admired crop — a long crop, much like the tail of a horse — a switch tail. The fine figure was meagre, prim, and constrained. The beauty, the grace, and the elegance existed, no doubt, in their utmost perfection, but only in the imagination of her partial young sister. Her father, as Harriet told me, was familiarly called 'Jew Westbrook,' and Eliza greatly resembled one of the dark-eyed daughters of Judah."

This portrait is drawn, no doubt, with an unfriendly hand; and, in Hogg's biography, each of its sarcastic touches is sustained with merciless reiteration, whenever the mention of Eliza's name is necessary. We hear, moreover, how she taught the blooming Harriet to fancy that she was a victim of her nerves, how she checked her favourite studies, and how she ruled the household by continual reference to a Mrs. Grundy of her earlier experience. "What would Miss Warne say?" was as often on her lips, if we may credit Hogg, as the brush and comb were in her hands.

The intrusion of Eliza disturbed the harmony of Shelley's circle; but it is possible that there were deeper reasons for the abrupt departure which he made from York with his wife and her sister in November, 1811. One of his biographers asserts with categorical precision that Shelley had good cause to resent Hogg's undue familiarity with Harriet, and refers to a curious composition, published by Hogg as a continuation of Goethe's "Werther", but believed by Mr. McCarthy to have been a letter from the poet to his

friend, in confirmation of his opinion. (McCarthy's Shelley's Early Life, page 117.) However this may be, the precipitation with which the Shelleys quitted York, scarcely giving Hogg notice of their resolution, is insufficiently accounted for in his biography.

The destination of the travellers was Keswick. Here they engaged lodgings for a time, and then moved into a furnished house. Probably Shelley was attracted to the lake country as much by the celebrated men who lived there, as by the beauty of its scenery, and the cheapness of its accommodation. He had long entertained an admiration for Southey's poetry, and was now beginning to study Wordsworth and Coleridge. But if he hoped for much companionship with the literary lions of the lakes, he was disappointed. Coleridge was absent, and missed making his acquaintance — a circumstance he afterwards regretted, saying that he could have been more useful to the young poet and metaphysician than Southey. De Quincey, though he writes ambiguously upon this point, does not seem to have met Shelley. Wordsworth paid him no attention; and though he saw a good deal of Southey, this intimacy changed Shelley's early liking for the man and poet into absolute contempt. It was not likely that the cold methodical student, the mechanical versifier, and the political turncoat, who had outlived all his earlier illusions, should retain the good-will of such an Ariel as Shelley, in whose brain "Queen Mab" was already simmering. Life at Keswick began to be monotonous. It was, however, enlivened by a visit to the Duke of Norfolk's seat, Greystoke. Shelley spent his last guinea on the trip; but though the ladies of his family enjoyed the honour of some days passed in ducal hospitalities, the visit was not fruitful of results. The Duke at this time kindly did his best, but without success, to bring about a reconciliation between his old friend, the member for Horsham, and his rebellious son.

Another important incident of the Keswick residence was Shelley's letter to William Godwin, whose work on Political Justice he had studied with unbounded admiration. He never spoke of this book without respect in after-life, affirming that the perusal of it had turned his attention from romances to questions of public utility. The earliest letter dated to Godwin from Keswick, January 3, 1812, is in many respects remarkable, and not the least so as a specimen of self-delineation. He entreats Godwin to become his guide, philosopher, and friend, urging that "if desire for universal happiness has any claim upon your preference," if persecution and injustice

suffered in the cause of philanthropy and truth may commend a young man to William Godwin's regard, he is not unworthy of this honour. We who have learned to know the flawless purity of Shelley's aspirations, can refrain from smiling at the big generalities of this epistle. Words which to men made callous by long contact with the world, ring false and wake suspicion, were for Shelley but the natural expression of his most abiding mood. Yet Godwin may be pardoned if he wished to know more in detail of the youth, who sought to cast himself upon his care in all the panoply of phrases about philanthropy and universal happiness. Shelley's second letter contains an extraordinary mixture of truth willingly communicated, and of curious romance, illustrating his tendency to colour facts with the hallucinations of an ardent fancy. Of his sincerity there is, I think, no doubt. He really meant what he wrote; and yet we have no reason to believe the statement that he was twice expelled from Eton for disseminating the doctrines of "Political Justice", or that his father wished to drive him by poverty to accept a commission in some distant regiment, in order that he might prosecute the "Necessity of Atheism" in his absence, procure a sentence of outlawry, and so convey the family estates to his younger brother. The embroidery of bare fact with a tissue of imagination was a peculiarity of Shelley's mind; and this letter may be used as a key for the explanation of many strange occurrences in his biography. What he tells Godwin about his want of love for his father, and his inability to learn from the tutors imposed upon him at Eton and Oxford, represents the simple truth. Only from teachers chosen by himself, and recognized as his superiors by his own deliberate judgment, can he receive instruction. To Godwin he resigns himself with the implicit confidence of admiration. Godwin was greatly struck with this letter. Indeed, he must have been "or God or beast," like the insensible man in Aristotle's "Ethics", if he could have resisted the devotion of so splendid and high-spirited a nature, poured forth in language at once so vehement and so convincingly sincere. He accepted the responsible post of Shelley's Mentor; and thus began a connexion which proved not only a source of moral support and intellectual guidance to the poet, but was also destined to end in a closer personal tie between the two illustrious men.

In his second letter Shelley told Godwin that he was then engaged in writing "An inquiry into the causes of the failure of the French Revolution to benefit mankind," adding, "My plan is that of resolving to lose no

opportunity to disseminate truth and happiness." Godwin sensibly replied that Shelley was too young to set himself up as a teacher and apostle: but his pupil did not take the hint. A third letter (January 16, 1812) contains this startling announcement: "In a few days we set off to Dublin. I do not know exactly where, but a letter addressed to Keswick will find me. Our journey has been settled some time. We go principally TO FORWARD AS MUCH AS WE CAN the Catholic Emancipation." In a fourth letter (January 28, 1812) he informs Godwin that he has already prepared an address to the Catholics of Ireland, and combats the dissuasions of his counsellor with ingenious arguments to prove that his contemplated expedition can do no harm, and may be fruitful of great good.

It appears that for some time past Shelley had devoted his attention to Irish politics. The persecution of Mr. Peter Finnerty, an Irish journalist and editor of "The Press" newspaper, who had been sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment in Lincoln jail (between February 7, 1811, and August 7, 1812) for plain speech about Lord Castlereagh, roused his hottest indignation. He published a poem, as yet unrecovered, for his benefit; the proceeds of the sale amounting, it is said, to nearly one hundred pounds. (McCarthy, page 255.) The young enthusiast, who was attempting a philosophic study of the French Revolution, whose heart was glowing with universal philanthropy, and who burned to disseminate truth and happiness, judged that Ireland would be a fitting field for making a first experiment in practical politics. Armed with the manuscript of his "Address to the Irish People" (It was published in Dublin. See reprint in McCarthy, page 179.), he set sail with Harriet and Eliza on the 3rd of February from Whitehaven. They touched the Isle of Man; and after a very stormy passage, which drove them to the north coast of Ireland, and forced them to complete their journey by land, the party reached Dublin travel-worn, but with unabated spirit, on the 12th. Harriet shared her husband's philanthropical enthusiasm. "My wife," wrote Shelley to Godwin, "is the partner of my thoughts and feelings." Indeed, there is abundant proof in both his letters and hers, about this period, that they felt and worked together. Miss Westbrook, meantime, ruled the household; "Eliza keeps our common stock of money for safety in some nook or corner of her dress, but we are not dependent on her, although she gives it out as we want it." This master-touch of unconscious delineation tells us all we need to know about the domestic party now established in 7, Lower Sackville Street. Before a week had passed, the

“Address to the Irish People” had been printed. Shelley and Harriet immediately engaged their whole energies in the task of distribution. It was advertised for sale; but that alone seemed insufficient. On the 27th of February Shelley wrote to a friend in England: “I have already sent 400 of my Irish pamphlets into the world, and they have excited a sensation of wonder in Dublin. Eleven hundred yet remain for distribution. Copies have been sent to sixty public houses.... Expectation is on the tiptoe. I send a man out every day to distribute copies, with instructions where and how to give them. His account corresponds with the multitudes of people who possess them. I stand at the balcony of our window and watch till I see a man WHO LOOKS LIKELY. I throw a book to him.”

A postscript to this letter lets us see the propaganda from Harriet’s point of view. “I am sure you would laugh were you to see us give the pamphlets. We throw them out of the window, and give them to men that we pass in the streets. For myself, I am ready to die of laughter when it is done, and Percy looks so grave. Yesterday he put one into a woman’s hood of a cloak.”

The purpose of this address was to rouse the Irish people to a sense of their real misery, to point out that Catholic Emancipation and a Repeal of the Union Act were the only radical remedies for their wrongs, and to teach them the spirit in which they should attempt a revolution. On the last point Shelley felt intensely. The whole address aims at the inculcation of a noble moral temper, tolerant, peaceful, resolute, rational, and self-denying. Considered as a treatise on the principles which should govern patriots during a great national crisis, the document is admirable: and if the inhabitants of Dublin had been a population of Shelleys, its effect might have been permanent and overwhelming. The mistake lay in supposing that a people whom the poet himself described as “of scarcely greater elevation in the scale of intellectual being than the oyster,” were qualified to take the remedy of their grievances into their own hands, or were amenable to such sound reasoning as he poured forth. He told Godwin that he had “wilfully vulgarized the language of this pamphlet, in order to reduce the remarks it contains to the taste and comprehension of the Irish peasantry.” A few extracts will enable the reader to judge how far he had succeeded in this aim. I select such as seem to me most valuable for the light they throw upon his own opinions. “All religions are good which make men good; and the way that a person ought to prove that his method of worshipping God is best, is for himself to be better than all other men.” “A Protestant is my

brother, and a Catholic is my brother." "Do not inquire if a man be a heretic, if he be a Quaker, a Jew, or a heathen; but if he be a virtuous man, if he loves liberty and truth, if he wish the happiness and peace of human kind. If a man be ever so much a believer and love not these things, he is a heartless hypocrite, a rascal and a knave." "It is not a merit to tolerate, but it is a crime to be intolerant." "Anything short of unlimited toleration and complete charity with all men, on which you will recollect that Jesus Christ principally insisted, is wrong." "Be calm, mild, deliberate, patient.... Think and talk and discuss.... Be free and be happy, but first be wise and good." Proceeding to recommend the formation of associations, he condemns secret and violent societies; "Be fair, open and you will be terrible to your enemies." "Habits of SOBRIETY, REGULARITY, and THOUGHT must be entered into and firmly resolved upon." Then follow precepts, which Shelley no doubt regarded as practical, for the purification of private morals, and the regulation of public discussion by the masses whom he elsewhere recognized as "thousands huddled together, one mass of animated filth."

The foregoing extracts show that Shelley was in no sense an inflammatory demagogue; however visionary may have been the hopes he indulged, he based those hopes upon the still more Utopian foundation of a sudden ethical reform, and preached a revolution without bloodshed. We find in them, moreover, the germs of "The Revolt of Islam", where the hero plays the part successfully in fiction, which the poet had attempted without appreciable result in practice at Dublin. The same principles guided Shelley at a still later period. When he wrote his "Masque of Anarchy", he bade the people of England to assemble by thousands, strong in the truth and justice of their cause, invincible in peaceful opposition to force.

While he was sowing his Address broadcast in the streets of Dublin, Shelley was engaged in printing a second pamphlet on the subject of Catholic Emancipation. It was entitled "Proposals for an Association", and advocated in serious and temperate phrase the formation of a vast society, binding all the Catholic patriots of Ireland together, for the recovery of their rights. In estimating Shelley's political sagacity, it must be remembered that Catholic emancipation has since his day been brought about by the very measure he proposed and under the conditions he foresaw. Speaking of the English Government in his Address, he used these simple phrases:—"It wants altering and mending. It will be mended, and a reform of English

Government will produce good to the Irish." These sentences were prophetic; and perhaps they are destined to be even more so.

With a view to presenting at one glance Shelley's position as a practical politician, I shall anticipate the course of a few years, and compare his Irish pamphlets with an essay published in 1817, under the title of "A Proposal for putting Reform to the Vote throughout the Kingdom". He saw that the House of Commons did not represent the country; and acting upon his principle that government is the servant of the governed, he sought means for ascertaining the real will of the nation with regard to its Parliament, and for bringing the collective opinion of the population to bear upon its rulers. The plan proposed was that a huge network of committees should be formed, and that by their means every individual man should be canvassed. We find here the same method of advancing reform by peaceable associations as in Ireland. How moderated were his own opinions with regard to the franchise, is proved by the following sentence:—"With respect to Universal Suffrage, I confess I consider its adoption, in the present unprepared state of public knowledge and feeling, a measure fraught with peril. I think that none but those who register their names as paying a certain small sum in DIRECT TAXES ought at present to send members to Parliament." As in the case of Ireland, so in that of England, subsequent events have shown that Shelley's hopes were not exaggerated.

While the Shelleys were in Dublin, a meeting of the Irish Catholics was announced for the evening of February 28. It was held in Fishamble Street Theatre; and here Shelley made his debut as an orator. He spoke for about an hour; and his speech was, on the whole, well received, though it raised some hisses at the beginning by his remarks upon Roman Catholicism. There is no proof that Shelley, though eloquent in conversation, was a powerful public speaker. The somewhat conflicting accounts we have received of this, his maiden effort, tend to the impression that he failed to carry his audience with him. The dissemination of his pamphlets had, however, raised considerable interest in his favour; and he was welcomed by the press as an Englishman of birth and fortune, who wished well to the Irish cause. His youth told somewhat against him. It was difficult to take the strong words of the beardless boy at their real value; and as though to aggravate this drawback, his Irish servant, Daniel Hill, an efficient agent in the dissemination of the Address, affirmed that his master was fifteen — four years less than his real age.

In Dublin Shelley made acquaintance with Curran, whose jokes and dirty stories he could not appreciate, and with a Mr. Lawless, who began a history of the Irish people in concert with the young philosopher. We also obtain, from one of Harriet's letters, a somewhat humorous peep at another of their friends, a patriotic Mrs. Nugent, who supported herself by working in a furrier's shop, and who is described as "sitting in the room now, and talking to Percy about Virtue." After less than two months' experience of his Irish propaganda, Shelley came to the conclusion that he "had done all that he could." The population of Dublin had not risen to the appeal of their Laon with the rapidity he hoped for; and accordingly upon the 7th of April he once more embarked with his family for Holyhead. In after-days he used to hint that the police had given him warning that it would be well for him to leave Dublin; but, though the danger of a prosecution was not wholly visionary, this intimation does not seem to have been made. Before he quitted Ireland, however, he despatched a box containing the remaining copies of his "Address" and "Proposals", together with the recently printed edition of another manifesto, called a "Declaration of Rights", to a friend in Sussex. This box was delayed at the Holyhead custom-house, and opened. Its contents gave serious anxiety to the Surveyor of Customs, who communicated the astonishing discovery through the proper official channels to the government. After some correspondence, the authorities decided to take no steps against Shelley, and the box was forwarded to its destination.

The friend in question was a Miss Eliza Hitchener, of Hurstpierpoint, who kept a sort of school, and who had attracted Shelley's favourable notice by her advanced political and religious opinions. He does not seem to have made her personal acquaintance; but some of his most interesting letters from Ireland are addressed to her. How recklessly he entered into serious entanglements with people whom he had not learned to know, may be gathered from these extracts:—"We will meet you in Wales, and never part again. It will not do. In compliance with Harriet's earnest solicitations, I entreated you instantly to come and join our circle, resign your school, all, everything for us and the Irish cause." "I ought to count myself a favoured mortal with such a wife and such a friend." Harriet addressed this lady as "Portia;" and it is an undoubted fact that soon after their return to England, Miss Hitchener formed one of their permanent family circle. Her entrance into it and her exit from it at no very distant period are, however, both

obscure. Before long she acquired another name than Portia in the Shelley household, and now she is better known as the "Brown Demon." Eliza Westbrook took a strong dislike to her; Harriet followed suit; and Shelley himself found that he had liked her better at a distance than in close companionship. She had at last to be bought off or bribed to leave.

The scene now shifts with bewildering frequency; nor is it easy to trace the Shelleys in their rapid flight. About the 21st of April, they settled for a short time at Nantgwilt, near Rhayader, in North Wales. Ere long we find them at Lynmouth, on the Somersetshire coast. Here Shelley continued his political propaganda, by circulating the "Declaration of Rights", whereof mention has already been made. It was, as Mr. W.M. Rossetti first pointed out, a manifesto concerning the ends of government and the rights of man, — framed in imitation of two similar French Revolutionary documents, issued by the Constituent Assembly in August, 1789, and by Robespierre in April, 1793. (Reprinted in McCarthy, page 324.) Shelley used to seal this pamphlet in bottles and set it afloat upon the sea, hoping perhaps that after this wise it would traverse St. George's Channel and reach the sacred soil of Erin. He also employed his servant, Daniel Hill, to distribute it among the Somersetshire farmers. On the 19th of August this man was arrested in the streets of Barnstaple, and sentenced to six months' imprisonment for uttering a seditious pamphlet; and the remaining copies of the "Declaration of Rights" were destroyed. In strong contrast with the puerility of these proceedings, is the grave and lofty "Letter to Lord Ellenborough", composed at Lynmouth, and printed at Barnstaple. (Reprinted in Lady Shelley's Memorials, page 29.) A printer, named D.J. Eaton, had recently been sentenced to imprisonment by his Lordship for publishing the Third Part of Paine's "Age of Reason". Shelley's epistle is an eloquent argument in favour of toleration and the freedom of the intellect, carrying the matter beyond the instance of legal tyranny which occasioned its composition, and treating it with philosophic, if impassioned seriousness.

An extract from this composition will serve to show his power of handling weighty English prose, while yet a youth of hardly twenty. I have chosen a passage bearing on his theological opinions: —

"Moral qualities are such as only a human being can possess. To attribute them to the Spirit of the Universe, or to suppose that it is capable of altering them, is to degrade God into man, and to annex to this incomprehensible Being qualities incompatible with any possible definition of his nature.

“It may be here objected: Ought not the Creator to possess the perfections of the creature? No. To attribute to God the moral qualities of man, is to suppose him susceptible of passions, which, arising out of corporeal organization, it is plain that a pure spirit cannot possess.... But even suppose, with the vulgar, that God is a venerable old man, seated on a throne of clouds, his breast the theatre of various passions, analogous to those of humanity, his will changeable and uncertain as that of an earthly king; still, goodness and justice are qualities seldom nominally denied him, and it will be admitted that he disapproves of any action incompatible with those qualities. Persecution for opinion is unjust. With what consistency, then, can the worshippers of a Deity whose benevolence they boast, embitter the existence of their fellow-being, because his ideas of that Deity are different from those which they entertain? Alas! there is no consistency in those persecutors who worship a benevolent Deity; those who worship a demon would alone act consonantly to these principles by imprisoning and torturing in his name.”

Shelley had more than once urged Godwin and his family to visit him. The sage of Skinner Street thought that now was a convenient season. Accordingly he left London, and travelled by coach to Lynmouth, where he found that the Shelleys had flitted a few days previously without giving any notice. This fruitless journey of the poet’s Mentor is humorously described by Hogg, as well as one undertaken by himself in the following year to Dublin with a similar result. The Shelleys were now established at Tan-yr-allt, near Tremadoc, in North Wales, on an estate belonging to Mr. W.A. Madocks, M.P. for Boston. This gentleman had reclaimed a considerable extent of marshy ground from the sea, and protected it with an embankment. Shelley, whose interest in the poor people around him was always keen and practical, lost no time in making their acquaintance at Tremadoc. The work of utility carried out by his landlord aroused his enthusiastic admiration; and when the embankment was emperilled by a heavy sea, he got up a subscription for its preservation. Heading the list with 500 pounds, how raised, or whether paid, we know not, he endeavoured to extract similar sums from the neighbouring gentry, and even ran up with Harriet to London to use his influence for the same purpose with the Duke of Norfolk. On this occasion he made the personal acquaintance of the Godwin family.

Life at Tanyrallt was smooth and studious, except for the diversion caused by the peril to the embankment. We hear of Harriet continuing her Latin studies, reading Odes of Horace, and projecting an epistle in that language to Hogg. Shelley, as usual, collected many books around him. There are letters extant in which he writes to London for Spinoza and Kant, Plato, and the works of the chief Greek historians. It appears that at this period, under the influence of Godwin, he attempted to conquer a strong natural dislike of history. "I am determined to apply myself to a study which is hateful and disgusting to my very soul, but which is above all studies necessary for him who would be listened to as a mender of antiquated abuses, — I mean, that record of crimes and miseries — history." Although he may have made an effort to apply himself to historical reading, he was not successful. His true bias inclined him to metaphysics coloured by a glowing fancy, and to poetry penetrated with speculative enthusiasm. In the historic sense he was deficient; and when he made a serious effort at a later period to compose a tragedy upon the death of Charles I, this work was taken up with reluctance, continued with effort, and finally abandoned.

In the same letters he speaks about a collection of short poems on which he was engaged, and makes frequent allusions to "Queen Mab". It appears, from his own assertion, and from Medwin's biography, that a poem on Queen Mab had been projected and partially written by him at the early age of eighteen. But it was not taken seriously in hand until the spring of 1812; nor was it finished and printed before 1813. The first impression was a private issue of 250 copies, on fine paper, which Shelley distributed to people whom he wished to influence. It was pirated soon after its appearance, and again in 1821 it was given to the public by a bookseller named Clarke. Against the latter republication Shelley energetically protested, disclaiming in a letter addressed to "The Examiner", from Pisa, June 22, 1821, any interest in a production which he had not even seen for several years. "I doubt not but that it is perfectly worthless in point of literary composition; and that in all that concerns moral and political speculation, as well as in the subtler discriminations of metaphysical and religious doctrine, it is still more crude and immature. I am a devoted enemy to religious, political and domestic oppression; and I regret this publication, not so much from literary vanity as because I fear it is better fitted to injure than to serve the sacred cause of freedom." This judgment is undoubtedly severe; but, though exaggerated in its condemnation, it, like all

Shelley's criticisms on his own works, expresses the truth. We cannot include "Queen Mab", in spite of its sonorous rhetoric and fervid declamation, in the canon of his masterpieces. It had a succes de scandale on its first appearance, and fatally injured Shelley's reputation. As a work of art it lacks maturity and permanent vitality.

The Shelleys were suddenly driven away from Tanyrallt by a mysterious occurrence, of which no satisfactory explanation has yet been given. According to letters written by himself and Harriet soon after the event, and confirmed by the testimony of Eliza, Shelley was twice attacked upon the night of February 24 by an armed ruffian, with whom he struggled in hand-to-hand combat. Pistols were fired and windows broken, and Shelley's nightgown was shot through: but the assassin made his escape from the house without being recognized. His motive and his personality still remain matters of conjecture. Whether the whole affair was a figment of Shelley's brain, rendered more than usually susceptible by laudanum taken to assuage intense physical pain; whether it was a perilous hoax played upon him by the Irish servant, Daniel Hill; or whether, as he himself surmised, the crime was instigated by an unfriendly neighbour, it is impossible to say. Strange adventures of this kind, blending fact and fancy in a now inextricable tangle, are of no unfrequent occurrence in Shelley's biography. In estimating the relative proportions of the two factors in this case, it must be borne in mind, on the one hand, that no one but Shelley, who was alone in the parlour, and who for some unexplained reason had loaded his pistols on the evening before the alleged assault, professed to have seen the villain; and, on the other, that the details furnished by Harriet, and confirmed at a subsequent period by so hostile a witness as Eliza, are too circumstantial to be lightly set aside.

On the whole it appears most probable that Shelley on this night was the subject of a powerful hallucination. The theory of his enemies at Tanyrallt, that the story had been invented to facilitate his escape from the neighbourhood without paying his bills, may be dismissed. But no investigation on the spot could throw any clear light on the circumstance, and Shelley's friends, Hogg, Peacock, and Mr. Madocks, concurred in regarding the affair as a delusion.

There was no money in the common purse of the Shelleys at this moment. In their distress they applied to Mr. T. Hookham, a London publisher, who sent them enough to carry them across the Irish channel.

After a short residence in 35, Cuffe Street, Dublin, and a flying visit to Killarney, they returned to London. Eliza, for some reason as unexplained as the whole episode of this second visit to Ireland, was left behind for a short season. The flight from Tanyrallt closes the first important period of Shelley's life; and his settlement in London marks the beginning of another, fruitful of the gravest consequences and decisive of his future.

CHAPTER 4. SECOND RESIDENCE IN LONDON, AND SEPARATION FROM HARRIET.

Early in May the Shelleys arrived in London, where they were soon joined by Eliza, from whose increasingly irksome companionship the poet had recently enjoyed a few weeks' respite. After living for a short while in hotels, they took lodgings in Half Moon Street. The house had a projecting window, where the poet loved to sit with book in hand, and catch, according to his custom, the maximum of sunlight granted by a chary English summer. "He wanted," said one of his female admirers, "only a pan of clear water and a fresh turf to look like some young lady's lark, hanging outside for air and song." According to Hogg, this period of London life was a pleasant and tranquil episode in Shelley's troubled career. His room was full of books, among which works of German metaphysics occupied a prominent place, though they were not deeply studied. He was now learning Italian, and made his first acquaintance with Tasso, Ariosto, and Petrarch.

The habits of the household were, to say the least, irregular; for Shelley took no thought of sublunary matters, and Harriet was an indifferent housekeeper. Dinner seems to have come to them less by forethought than by the operation of divine chance; and when there was no meat provided for the entertainment of casual guests, the table was supplied with buns, procured by Shelley from the nearest pastry-cook. He had already abjured animal food and alcohol; and his favourite diet consisted of pulse or bread, which he ate dry with water, or made into panada. Hogg relates how, when he was walking in the streets and felt hungry, he would dive into a baker's shop and emerge with a loaf tucked under his arm. $This he consumed as he went along, very often reading at the same time, and dodging the foot-passengers with the rapidity of movement which distinguished him. He could not comprehend how any man should want more than bread. "I have dropped a word, a hint," says Hogg, "about a pudding; a pudding, Bysshe said dogmatically, is a prejudice." This indifference to diet was highly characteristic of Shelley. During the last years of his life, even when he was suffering from the frequent attacks of a painful disorder, he took no heed of food; and his friend, Trelawny, attributes the derangement of his health, in a great measure, to this carelessness. Mrs. Shelley used to send him something to eat into the room where he habitually studied; but the plate

frequently remained untouched for hours upon a bookshelf, and at the end of the day he might be heard asking, "Mary, have I dined?" His dress was no less simple than his diet. Hogg says that he never saw him in a great coat, and that his collar was unbuttoned to let the air play freely on his throat. "In the street or road he reluctantly wore a hat; but in fields and gardens, his little round head had no other covering than his long, wild, ragged locks." Shelley's head, as is well known, was remarkably small and round; he used to plunge it several times a day in cold water, and expose it recklessly to the intensest heat of fire or sun. Mrs. Shelley relates that a great part of the "Cenci" was written on their house-roof near Leghorn, where Shelley lay exposed to the unmitigated ardour of Italian summer heat; and Hogg describes him reading Homer by a blazing fire-light, or roasting his skull upon the hearth-rug by the hour.

These personal details cannot be omitted by the biographer of such a man as Shelley. He was an elemental and primeval creature, as little subject to the laws of custom in his habits as in his modes of thought, living literally as the spirit moved him, with a natural nonchalance that has perhaps been never surpassed. To time and place he was equally indifferent, and could not be got to remember his engagements. "He took strange caprices, unfounded frights and dislikes, vain apprehensions and panic terrors, and therefore he absented himself from formal and sacred engagements. He was unconscious and oblivious of times, places, persons and seasons; and falling into some poetic vision, some day-dream, he quickly and completely forgot all that he had repeatedly and solemnly promised; or he ran away after some object of imaginary urgency and importance, which suddenly came into his head, setting off in vain pursuit of it, he knew not whither. When he was caught, brought up in custody, and turned over to the ladies, with, Behold, your King! to be caressed, courted, admired, and flattered, the king of beauty and fancy would too commonly bolt; slip away, steal out, creep off; unobserved and almost magically he vanished; thus mysteriously depriving his fair subjects of his much-coveted, long looked-for company." If he had been fairly caged and found himself in congenial company, he let time pass unheeded, sitting up all night to talk, and chaining his audience by the spell of his unrivalled eloquence; for wonderful as was his poetry, those who enjoyed the privilege of converse with him, judged it even more attractive. "He was commonly most communicative, unreserved, and eloquent, and enthusiastic, when those

around him were inclining to yield to the influence of sleep, or rather at the hour when they would have been disposed to seek their chambers, but for the bewitching charms of his discourse."

From Half Moon Street the Shelleys moved into a house in Pimlico; and it was here, according to Hogg, or at Cooke's Hotel in Dover Street according to other accounts, that Shelley's first child, Ianthe Eliza, was born about the end of June, 1813. Harriet did not take much to her little girl, and gave her over to a wet-nurse, for whom Shelley conceived a great dislike. That a mother should not nurse her own baby was no doubt contrary to his principles; and the double presence of the servant and Eliza, whom he now most cordially detested, made his home uncomfortable. We have it on excellent authority, that of Mr. Peacock, that he "was extremely fond of it (the child), and would walk up and down a room with it in his arms for a long time together, singing to it a song of his own making, which ran on the repetition of a word of his own coining. His song was Yáhmani, Yáhmani, Yáhmani, Yáhmani." To the want of sympathy between the father and the mother in this matter of Ianthe, Mr. Peacock is inclined to attribute the beginning of troubles in the Shelley household. There is, indeed, no doubt that the revelation of Harriet's maternal coldness must have been extremely painful to her husband; and how far she carried her insensibility, may be gathered from a story told by Hogg about her conduct during an operation performed upon the child.

During this period of his sojourn in London, Shelley was again in some pecuniary difficulties. Yet he indulged Harriet's vanity by setting up a carriage, in which they afterwards took a hurried journey to Edinburgh and back. He narrowly escaped a debtor's prison through this act of extravagance, and by a somewhat ludicrous mistake Hogg was arrested for the debt due to the coach-maker. His acquaintances were few and scattered, and he saw nothing of his family. Gradually, however, he seems to have become a kind of prophet in a coterie of learned ladies. The views he had propounded in "Queen Mab", his passionate belief in the perfectibility of man, his vegetarian doctrines, and his readiness to adopt any new nostrum for the amelioration of his race, endeared him to all manners of strange people; nor was he deterred by aristocratic prejudices from frequenting society which proved extremely uncongenial to Hogg, and of which we have accordingly some caustic sketches from his pen. His chief friends were a Mrs. Boinville, for whom he conceived an enthusiastic admiration, and

her daughter Cornelia, married to a vegetarian, Mr. Newton. In order to be near them he had moved to Pimlico; and his next move, from London to a cottage named High Elms, at Bracknell, in Berkshire, had the same object. With Godwin and his family he was also on terms of familiar intercourse. Under the philosopher's roof in Skinner Street there was now gathered a group of miscellaneous inmates — Fanny Imlay, the daughter of his first wife, Mary Wollstonecraft; Mary, his own daughter by the same marriage; his second wife, and her two children, Claire and Charles Clairmont, the offspring of a previous union. From this connexion with the Godwin household events of the gravest importance in the future were destined to arise, and already it appears that Fanny Imlay had begun to look with perilous approval on the fascinating poet. Hogg and Mr. Peacock, the well-known novelist, described by Mrs. Newton as "a cold scholar, who, I think, has neither taste nor feeling," were his only intimates.

Mrs. Newton's unfair judgment of Mr. Peacock marks a discord between the two chief elements of Shelley's present society; and indeed it will appear to a careful student of his biography that Hogg, Peacock, and Harriet, now stood somewhat by themselves and aloof from the inner circle of his associates. If we regard the Shelleys as the centre of an extended line, we shall find the Westbrook family at one end, the Boinville family at the other, with Hogg and Peacock somewhere in the middle. Harriet was naturally drawn to the Westbrook extremity, and Shelley to the Boinville. Peacock had no affinity for either, but a sincere regard for Harriet as well as for her husband; while Hogg was in much the same position, except that he had made friends with Mrs. Newton. The Godwins, of great importance to Shelley himself, exercised their influence at a distance from the rest. Frequent change from Bracknell to London and back again, varied by the flying journey to Edinburgh, and a last visit paid in strictest secrecy to his mother and sisters, at Field Place, of which a very interesting record is left in the narrative of Mr. Kennedy, occupied the interval between July, 1813, and March, 1814. The period was not productive of literary masterpieces. We only hear of a "Refutation of Deism", a dialogue between Eusebes and Theosophus, which attacked all forms of Theistic belief.

Since we are now approaching the gravest crisis in Shelley's life, it behoves us to be more than usually careful in considering his circumstances at this epoch. His home had become cold and dull. Harriet did not love her child, and spent her time in a great measure with her Mount Street relations.

Eliza was a source of continual irritation, and the Westbrook family did its best, by interference and suggestion, to refrigerate the poet's feelings for his wife. On the other hand he found among the Boinville set exactly that high-flown, enthusiastic, sentimental atmosphere which suited his idealizing temper. Two extracts from a letter written to Hogg upon the 16th of March, 1814, speak more eloquently than any analysis, and will place before the reader the antagonism which had sprung up in Shelley's mind between his own home and the circle of his new friends:—"I have been staying with Mrs. B — for the last month; I have escaped, in the society of all that philosophy and friendship combine, from the dismaying solitude of myself. They have revived in my heart the expiring flame of life. I have felt myself translated to a paradise, which has nothing of mortality but its transitoriness; my heart sickens at the view of that necessity, which will quickly divide me from the delightful tranquillity of this happy home, — for it has become my home. The trees, the bridge, the minutest objects, have already a place in my affections."

"Eliza is still with us — not here! — but will be with me when the infinite malice of destiny forces me to depart. I am now but little inclined to contest this point. I certainly hate her with all my heart and soul. It is a sight which awakens an inexpressible sensation of disgust and horror, to see her caress my poor little Ianthe, in whom I may hereafter find the consolation of sympathy. I sometimes feel faint with the fatigue of checking the overflowings of my unbounded abhorrence for this miserable wretch. But she is no more than a blind and loathsome worm, that cannot see to sting."

While divided in this way between a home which had become distasteful to him, and a house where he found scope for his most romantic outpourings of sensibility, Shelley fell suddenly and passionately in love with Godwin's daughter, Mary. Peacock, who lived in close intimacy with him at this period, must deliver his testimony as to the overwhelming nature of the new attachment:—"Nothing that I ever read in tale or history could present a more striking image of a sudden, violent, irresistible, uncontrollable passion, than that under which I found him labouring when, at his request, I went up from the country to call on him in London. Between his old feelings towards Harriet, FROM WHOM HE WAS NOT THEN SEPARATED, and his new passion for Mary, he showed in his looks, in his gestures, in his speech, the state of a mind 'suffering, like a little kingdom, the nature of an insurrection.' His eyes were bloodshot, his

hair and dress disordered. He caught up a bottle of laudanum, and said, 'I never part from this.'"

We may therefore affirm, I think, with confidence that in the winter and spring of 1814, Shelley had been becoming gradually more and more estranged from Harriet, whose commonplace nature was no mate for his, and whom he had never loved with all the depth of his affection; that his intimacy with the Boinville family had brought into painful prominence whatever was jarring and repugnant to him in his home; and that in this crisis of his fate he had fallen in love for the first time seriously with Mary Godwin. (The date at which he first made Mary's acquaintance is uncertain. Peacock says that it was between April 18 and June 8.) She was then a girl of sixteen, "fair and fair-haired, pale indeed, and with a piercing look," to quote Hogg's description of her, as she first appeared before him on the 8th or 9th of June, 1814. With her freedom from prejudice, her tense and high-wrought sensibility, her acute intellect, enthusiasm for ideas, and vivid imagination, Mary Godwin was naturally a fitter companion for Shelley than the good Harriet, however beautiful.

That Shelley early in 1814 had no intention of leaving his wife, is probable; for he was re-married to her on the 24th of March, eight days after his impassioned letter to Hogg, in St. George's, Hanover Square. Harriet was pregnant, and this ratification of the Scotch marriage was no doubt intended to place the legitimacy of a possible heir beyond all question. Yet it seems, if we may found conjecture on "Stanzas, April, 1814," that in the very month after this new ceremony Shelley found the difficulties of his wedded life insuperable, and that he was already making up his mind to part from Harriet. About the middle of June the separation actually occurred — not by mutual consent, so far as any published documents throw light on the matter, but rather by Shelley's sudden abandonment of his wife and child. (Leigh Hunt, Autobiography page 236, and Medwin, however, both assert that it was by mutual consent. The whole question must be studied in Peacock and in Garnett, Relics of Shelly, page 147.) For a short while Harriet was left in ignorance of his abode, and with a very insufficient sum of money at her disposal. She placed herself under the protection of her father, retired to Bath, and about the beginning of July received a letter from Shelley, who was thenceforth solicitous for her welfare, keeping up a correspondence with her, supplying her with funds, and by no means shrinking from personal communications.

That Shelley must bear the responsibility of this separation seems to me quite clear. His justification is to be found in his avowed opinions on the subject of love and marriage — opinions which Harriet knew well and professed to share, and of which he had recently made ample confession in the notes to "Queen Mab". The world will still agree with Lord Eldon in regarding those opinions as dangerous to society, and a blot upon the poet's character; but it would be unfair, while condemning them as frankly as he professed them, to blame him also because he did not conform to the opposite code of morals, for which he frequently expressed extreme abhorrence, and which he stigmatized, however wrongly, as the source of the worst social vices. It must be added that the Shelley family in their memorials of the poet, and through their friend, Mr. Richard Garnett, inform us, without casting any slur on Harriet, that documents are extant which will completely vindicate the poet's conduct in this matter. It is therefore but just to await their publication before pronouncing a decided judgment. Meanwhile there remains no doubt about the fact that forty days after leaving Harriet, Shelley departed from London with Mary Godwin, who had consented to share his fortunes. How he plighted his new troth, and won the hand of her who was destined to be his companion for life, may best be told in Lady Shelley's words: —

"His anguish, his isolation, his difference from other men, his gifts of genius and eloquent enthusiasm, made a deep impression on Godwin's daughter Mary, now a girl of sixteen, who had been accustomed to hear Shelley spoken of as something rare and strange. To her, as they met one eventful day in St. Pancras Churchyard, by her mother's grave, Bysshe, in burning words, poured forth the tale of his wild past — how he had suffered, how he had been misled, and how, if supported by her love, he hoped in future years to enrol his name with the wise and good who had done battle for the fellow-men, and been true through all adverse storms to the cause of humanity. Unhesitatingly, she placed her hand in his, and linked her fortune with his own; and most truthfully, as the remaining portions of these Memorials will prove, was the pledge of both redeemed. The theories in which the daughter of the authors of "Political Justice", and of the "Rights of Woman", had been educated, spared her from any conflict between her duty and her affection. For she was the child of parents whose writings had had for their object to prove that marriage was one among the many institutions which a new era in the history of mankind was about to

sweep away. By her father, whom she loved — by the writings of her mother, whom she had been taught to venerate — these doctrines had been rendered familiar to her mind. It was therefore natural that she should listen to the dictates of her own heart, and willingly unite her fate with one who was so worthy of her love."

Soon after her withdrawal to Bath, Harriet gave birth to Shelley's second child, Charles Bysshe, who died in 1826. She subsequently formed another connexion which proved unhappy; and on the 10th of November, 1816, she committed suicide by drowning herself in the Serpentine. The distance of time between June, 1814, and November, 1816, and the new ties formed by Harriet in this interval, prove that there was no immediate connexion between Shelley's abandonment of his wife and her suicide. She had always entertained the thought of self-destruction, as Hogg, who is no adverse witness in her case, has amply recorded; and it may be permitted us to suppose that, finding herself for the second time unhappy in her love, she reverted to a long-since cherished scheme, and cut the knot of life and all its troubles.

So far as this is possible, I have attempted to narrate the most painful period in Shelley's life as it occurred, without extenuation and without condemnation. Until the papers, mentioned with such insistence by Lady Shelley and Mr. Garnett, are given to the world, it is impossible that the poet should not bear the reproach of heartlessness and inconstancy in this the gravest of all human relations. Such, however, is my belief in the essential goodness of his character, after allowing, as we must do, for the operation of his peculiar principles upon his conduct, that I for my own part am willing to suspend my judgment till the time arrives for his vindication. The language used by Lady Shelley and Mr. Garnett justify us in expecting that that vindication will be as startling as complete. If it is not, they, as pleading for him, will have overshot the mark of prudence.

On the 28th of July Shelley left London with Mary Godwin, who up to this date had remained beneath her father's roof. There was some secrecy in their departure, because they were accompanied by Miss Clairmont, whose mother disapproved of her forming a third in the party. Having made their way to Dover, they crossed the Channel in an open boat, and went at once to Paris. Here they hired a donkey for their luggage, intending to perform the journey across France on foot. Shelley, however, sprained his ancle, and a mule-carriage was provided for the party. In this conveyance they reached

the Jura, and entered Switzerland at Neufchatel. Brunnen, on the Lake of Lucerne, was chosen for their residence; and here Shelley began his romantic tale of "The Assassins", a portion of which is printed in his prose works. Want of money compelled them soon to think of turning their steps homeward; and the back journey was performed upon the Reuss and Rhine. They reached Gravesend, after a bad passage, on the 13th of September. Mrs. Shelley's "History of a Six Week's Tour" relates the details of this trip, which was of great importance in forming Shelley's taste, and in supplying him with the scenery of river, rock, and mountain, so splendidly utilized in "Alastor".

The autumn was a period of more than usual money difficulty; but on the 6th of January, 1815, Sir Bysshe died, Percy became the next heir to the baronetcy and the family estates, and an arrangement was made with his father by right of which he received an allowance of 1000 pounds a year. A portion of his income was immediately set apart for Harriet. The winter was passed in London, where Shelley walked a hospital, in order, it is said, to acquire some medical knowledge that might be of service to the poor he visited. His own health at this period was very bad. A physician whom he consulted pronounced that he was rapidly sinking under pulmonary disease, and he suffered frequent attacks of acute pain. The consumptive symptoms seem to have been so marked that for the next three years he had no doubt that he was destined to an early death. In 1818, however, all danger of phthisis passed away; and during the rest of his short life he only suffered from spasms and violent pains in the side, which baffled the physicians, but, though they caused him extreme anguish, did not menace any vital organ. To the subject of his health it will be necessary to return at a later period of this biography. For the present it is enough to remember that his physical condition was such as to justify his own expectation of death at no distant time. (See Letter to Godwin in Shelley's Memorials, page 78.)

Fond as ever of wandering, Shelley set out in the early summer for a tour with Mary. They visited Devonshire and Clifton, and then settled in a house on Bishopsgate Heath, near Windsor Forest. The summer was further broken by a water excursion up the Thames to its source, in the company of Mr. Peacock and Charles Clairmont. Peacock traces the poet's taste for boating, which afterwards became a passion with him, to this excursion. About this there is, however, some doubt. Medwin tells us that Shelley while a boy delighted in being on the water, and that he enjoyed the pastime

at Eton. On the other hand, Mr. W.S. Halliday, a far better authority than Medwin, asserts positively that he never saw Shelley on the river at Eton, and Hogg relates nothing to prove that he practised rowing at Oxford. It is certain that, though inordinately fond of boats and every kind of water — river, sea, lake, or canal — he never learned to swim. Peacock also notices his habit of floating paper boats, and gives an amusing description of the boredom suffered by Hogg on occasions when Shelley would stop by the side of a pond or mere to float a mimic navy. The not altogether apocryphal story of his having once constructed a boat out of a bank-post-bill, and launched it on the lake in Kensington Gardens, deserves to be alluded to in this connexion.

On their return from this river journey, Shelley began the poem of "Alastor", haunting the woodland glades and oak groves of Windsor Forest, and drawing from that noble scenery his inspiration. It was printed with a few other poems in one volume the next year. Not only was "Alastor" the first serious poem published by Shelley; but it was also the first of his compositions which revealed the greatness of his genius. Rarely has blank verse been written with more majesty and music; and while the influence of Milton and Wordsworth may be traced in certain passages, the versification, tremulous with lyrical vibrations, is such as only Shelley could have produced.

"Alastor" is the Greek name for a vengeful daemon, driving its victim into desert places; and Shelley, prompted by Peacock, chose it for the title of a poem which describes the Nemesis of solitary souls. Apart from its intrinsic merit as a work of art, "Alastor" has great autobiographical value. Mrs. Shelley affirms that it was written under the expectation of speedy death, and under the sense of disappointment, consequent upon the misfortunes of his early life. This accounts for the somewhat unhealthy vein of sentiment which threads the wilderness of its sublime descriptions. All that Shelley had observed of natural beauty — in Wales, at Lynton, in Switzerland, upon the eddies of the Reuss, beneath the oak shades of the forest — is presented to us in a series of pictures penetrated with profound emotion. But the deeper meaning of "Alastor" is to be found, not in the thought of death nor in the poet's recent communings with nature, but in the motto from St. Augustine placed upon its title page, and in the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty", composed about a year later. Enamoured of ideal loveliness, the poet pursues his vision through the universe, vainly hoping

to assuage the thirst which has been stimulated in his spirit, and vainly longing for some mortal realization of his love. “Alastor”, like “Epipsychidion,” reveals the mistake which Shelley made in thinking that the idea of beauty could become incarnate for him in any earthly form: while the “Hymn to Intellectual Beauty” recognizes the truth that such realization of the ideal is impossible. The very last letter written by Shelley sets the misconception in its proper light: “I think one is always in love with something or other; the error, and I confess it is not easy for spirits cased in flesh and blood to avoid it, consists in seeking in a mortal image the likeness of what is, perhaps, eternal.” But this Shelley discovered only with “the years that bring the philosophic mind,” and when he was upon the very verge of his untimely death.

The following quotation is a fair specimen of the blank verse of “Alastor”. It expresses that longing for perfect sympathy in an ideal love, which the sense of divine beauty had stirred in the poet’s heart: —

At length upon the lone Chorasmian shore
He paused, a wide and melancholy waste
Of putrid marshes. A strong impulse urged
His steps to the sea-shore. A swan was there,
Beside a sluggish stream among the reeds.
It rose as he approached, and, with strong wings
Scaling the upward sky, bent its bright course
High over the immeasurable main.
His eyes pursued its flight:—”Thou hast a home,
Beautiful bird! thou voyagest to thine home,
Where thy sweet mate will twine her downy neck
With thine, and welcome thy return with eyes
Bright in the lustre of their own fond joy.
And what am I that I should linger here,
With voice far sweeter than thy dying notes,
Spirit more vast than thine, frame more attuned
To beauty, wasting these surpassing powers
In the deaf air, to the blind earth, and heaven
That echoes not my thoughts?” A gloomy smile
Of desperate hope wrinkled his quivering lips.
For Sleep, he knew, kept most relentlessly

Its precious charge, and silent Death exposed,
Faithless perhaps as Sleep, a shadowy lure,
With doubtful smile mocking its own strange charms.

William, the eldest son of Shelley and Mary Godwin, was born on the 24th of January, 1816. In the spring of that year they went together, accompanied by Miss Clairmont, for a second time to Switzerland. They reached Geneva on the 17th of May and were soon after joined by Lord Byron and his travelling physician, Dr. Polidori. Shelley had not yet made Byron's acquaintance, though he had sent him a copy of "Queen Mab", with a letter, which miscarried in the post. They were now thrown into daily intercourse, occupying the villas Diodati and Mount Alegre, at no great distance from each other, passing their days upon the lake in a boat which they purchased, and spending the nights in conversation. Miss Clairmont had known Byron in London, and their acquaintance now ripened into an intimacy, the fruit of which was the child Allegra. This fact has to be mentioned by Shelley's biographer, because Allegra afterwards became an inmate of his home; and though he and Mary were ignorant of what was passing at Geneva, they did not withdraw their sympathy from the mother of Lord Byron's daughter. The lives of Byron and Shelley during the next six years were destined to be curiously blent. Both were to seek in Italy an exile-home; while their friendship was to become one of the most interesting facts of English literary history. The influence of Byron upon Shelley, as he more than once acknowledged, and as his wife plainly perceived, was, to a great extent, depressing. For Byron's genius and its fruits in poetry he entertained the highest possible opinion. He could not help comparing his own achievement and his fame with Byron's; and the result was that in the presence of one whom he erroneously believed to be the greater poet, he became inactive. Shelley, on the contrary, stimulated Byron's productive faculty to nobler efforts, raised his moral tone, and infused into his less subtle intellect something of his own philosophical depth and earnestness. Much as he enjoyed Byron's society and admired his writing, Shelley was not blind to the imperfections of his nature. The sketch which he has left us of Count Maddalo, the letters written to his wife from Venice and Ravenna, and his correspondence on the subject of Leigh Hunt's visit to Italy, supply the most discriminating criticism which has yet been passed upon his brother poet's character. It is clear that he never found in

Byron a perfect friend, and that he had not accepted him as one with whom he sympathized upon the deeper questions of feeling and conduct. Byron, for his part, recognized in Shelley the purest nature he had ever known. “He was the most gentle, the most amiable, and least worldly-minded person I ever met; full of delicacy, disinterested beyond all other men, and possessing a degree of genius joined to simplicity as rare as it is admirable. He had formed to himself a beau ideal of all that is fine, high-minded, and noble, and he acted up to this ideal even to the very letter.”

Toward the end of June the two poets made the tour of Lake Geneva in their boat, and were very nearly wrecked off the rocks of Meillerie. On this occasion Shelley was in imminent danger of death from drowning. His one anxiety, however, as he wrote to Peacock, was lest Byron should attempt to save him at the risk of his own life. Byron described him as “bold as a lion;” and indeed it may here be said, once and for all, that Shelley’s physical courage was only equalled by his moral fearlessness. He carried both without bravado to the verge of temerity, and may justly be said to have never known what terror was. Another summer excursion was a visit to Chamouni, of which he has left memorable descriptions in his letters to Peacock, and in the somewhat Coleridgian verses on Mont Blanc. The preface to “Laon and Cythna” shows what a powerful impression had been made upon him by the glaciers, and how he delighted in the element of peril. There is a tone of exultation in the words which record the experiences of his two journeys in Switzerland and France:—”I have been familiar from boyhood with mountains and lakes and the sea, and the solitude of forests. Danger, which sports upon the brink of precipices, has been my playmate. I have trodden the glaciers of the Alps, and lived under the eye of Mont Blanc. I have been a wanderer among distant fields. I have sailed down mighty rivers, and seen the sun rise and set, and the stars come forth, whilst I have sailed night and day down a rapid stream among mountains. I have seen populous cities, and have watched the passions which rise and spread, and sink and change amongst assembled multitudes of men. I have seen the theatre of the more visible ravages of tyranny and war, cities and villages reduced to scattered groups of black and roofless houses, and the naked inhabitants sitting famished upon their desolated thresholds.”

On their return to the lake, the Shelleys found M.G. Lewis established with Byron. This addition to the circle introduced much conversation about

apparitions, and each member of the party undertook to produce a ghost story. Polidori's "Vampyre" and Mrs. Shelley's "Frankenstein" were the only durable results of their determination. But an incident occurred which is of some importance in the history of Shelley's psychological condition. Toward midnight on the 18th of July, Byron recited the lines in "Christabel" about the lady's breast; when Shelley suddenly started up, shrieked, and fled from the room. He had seen a vision of a woman with eyes instead of nipples. At this time he was writing notes upon the phenomena of sleep to be inserted in his "Speculations on Metaphysics", and Mrs. Shelley informs us that the mere effort to remember dreams of thrilling or mysterious import so disturbed his nervous system that he had to relinquish the task. At no period of his life was he wholly free from visions which had the reality of facts. Sometimes they occurred in sleep, and were prolonged with painful vividness into his waking moments. Sometimes they seemed to grow out of his intense meditation, or to present themselves before his eyes as the projection of a powerful inner impression. All his sensations were abnormally acute, and his ever-active imagination confused the border-lands of the actual and the visionary. Such a nature as Shelley's, through its far greater susceptibility than is common even when with artistic temperaments, was debarred in moments of high-strung emotion from observing the ordinary distinctions of subject and object; and this peculiar quality must never be forgotten when we seek to estimate the proper proportions of Dichtung and Wahreit in certain episodes of his biography. The strange story, for example, told by Peacock about a supposed warning he had received in the spring of this year from Mr. Williams of Tremadoc, may possibly be explained on the hypothesis that his brooding thoughts had taken form before him, both ear and eye having been unconsciously pressed into the service of a subjective energy. (Fraser's Magazine, January, 1860, page 98.)

On their return to England in September, Shelley took a cottage at Great Marlow on the Thames, in order to be near his friend Peacock. While it was being prepared for the reception of his family, he stayed at Bath, and there heard of Harriet's suicide. The life that once was dearest to him, had ended thus in misery, desertion, want. The mother of his two children, abandoned by both her husband and her lover, and driven from her father's home, had drowned herself after a brief struggle with circumstance. However Shelley may have felt that his conscience was free from blame, however small an

element of self-reproach may have mingled with his grief and horror, there is no doubt that he suffered most acutely. His deepest ground for remorse seems to have been the conviction that he had drawn Harriet into a sphere of thought and feeling for which she was not qualified, and that had it not been for him and his opinions, she might have lived a happy woman in some common walk of life. One of his biographers asserts that "he continued to be haunted by certain recollections, partly real and partly imaginative, which pursued him like an Orestes," and even Trelawny, who knew him only in the last months of his life, said that the impression of that dreadful moment was still vivid. We may trace the echo of his feelings in some painfully pathetic verses written in 1817 (Forman, 3 148.); and though he did not often speak of Harriet, Peacock has recorded one memorable occasion on which he disclosed the anguish of his spirit to a friend. (Fraser, January, 1860, page 102.)

Shelley hurried at once to London, and found some consolation in the society of Leigh Hunt. The friendship extended to him by that excellent man at this season of his trouble may perhaps count for something with those who are inclined to judge him harshly. Two important events followed immediately upon the tragedy. The first was Shelley's marriage with Mary Godwin on the 30th of December, 1816. Whether Shelley would have taken this step except under strong pressure from without, appears to me very doubtful. Of all men who ever lived, he was the most resolutely bent on confirming his theories by his practice; and in this instance there was no valid reason why he should not act up to principles professed in common by himself and the partner of his fortunes, no less than by her father and mother. It is, therefore, reasonable to suppose that he yielded to arguments; and these arguments must have been urged by Godwin, who had never treated him with cordiality since he left England in 1816. Godwin, though overrated in his generation, and almost ludicrously idealized by Shelley, was a man whose talents verged on genius. But he was by no means consistent. His conduct in money-matters shows that he could not live the life of a self-sufficing philosopher; while the irritation he expressed when Shelley omitted to address him as Esquire, stood in comic contradiction with his published doctrines. We are therefore perhaps justified in concluding that he worried Shelley, the one enthusiastic and thorough-going follower he had, into marrying his daughter in spite of his disciple's protestations; nor shall we be far wrong if we surmise that Godwin

congratulated himself on Mary's having won the right to bear the name of a future baronet.

The second event was the refusal of Mr. Westbrook to deliver up the custody of his grandchildren. A chancery suit was instituted; at the conclusion of which, in August, 1817, Lord Eldon deprived Shelley of his son and daughter on the double ground of his opinions expressed in "Queen Mab", and of his conduct toward his first wife. The children were placed in the hands of a clergyman, to be educated in accordance with principles diametrically opposed to their parent's, while Shelley's income was mulcted in a sum of 200 pounds for their maintenance. Thus sternly did the father learn the value of that ancient Aeschylean maxim, to drasanti pathein, the doer of the deed must suffer. His own impulsiveness, his reckless assumption of the heaviest responsibilities, his overweening confidence in his own strength to move the weight of the world's opinions, had brought him to this tragic pass — to the suicide of the woman who had loved him, and to the sequestration of the offspring whom he loved.

Shelley is too great to serve as text for any sermon; and yet we may learn from him as from a hero of Hebrew or Hellenic story. His life was a tragedy; and like some protagonist of Greek drama, he was capable of erring and of suffering greatly. He had kicked against the altar of justice as established in the daily sanctities of human life; and now he had to bear the penalty. The conventions he despised and treated like the dust beneath his feet, were found in this most cruel crisis to be a rock on which his very heart was broken. From this rude trial of his moral nature he arose a stronger being; and if longer life had been granted him, he would undoubtedly have presented the ennobling spectacle of one who had been lessoned by his own audacity, and by its bitter fruits, into harmony with the immutable laws which he was ever seeking to obey. It is just this conflict between the innate rectitude of Shelley's over-daring nature and the circumstances of ordinary existence, which makes his history so tragic; and we may justly wonder whether, when he read the Sophoclean tragedies of Oedipus, he did not apply their doctrine of self-will and Nemesis to his own fortunes.

CHAPTER 5. LIFE AT MARLOW, AND JOURNEY TO ITALY.

Amid the torturing distractions of the Chancery suit about his children, and the still more poignant anguish of his own heart, and with the cloud of what he thought swift-coming death above his head, Shelley worked steadily, during the summer of 1817, upon his poem of “Laon and Cythna”. Six months were spent in this task. “The poem,” to borrow Mrs. Shelley’s words, “was written in his boat, as it floated under the beech-groves of Bisham, or during wanderings in the neighbouring country, which is distinguished for peculiar beauty.” Whenever Shelley could, he composed in the open air. The terraces of the Villa Cappuccini at Este and the Baths of Caracalla were the birthplace of “Prometheus”. “The Cenci” was written on the roof of the Villa Valsovano at Leghorn. The Cascine of Florence, the pine-woods near Pisa, the lawns above San Guiliano, and the summits of the Euganean Hills, witnessed the creation of his loveliest lyrics; and his last great poem, the “Triumph of Life”, was transferred to paper in his boat upon the Bay of Spezia.

If “Alastor” had expressed one side of Shelley’s nature, his devotion to Ideal Beauty, “Laon and Cythna” was in a far profounder sense representative of its author. All his previous experiences and all his aspirations — his passionate belief in friendship, his principle of the equality of women with men, his demand for bloodless revolution, his confidence in eloquence and reason to move nations, his doctrine of free love, his vegetarianism, his hatred of religious intolerance and tyranny — are blent together and concentrated in the glowing cantos of this wonderful romance. The hero, Laon, is himself idealized, the self which he imagined when he undertook his Irish campaign. The heroine, Cythna, is the helpmate he had always dreamed, the woman exquisitely feminine, yet capable of being fired with male enthusiasms, and of grappling the real problems of our nature with a man’s firm grasp. In the first edition of the poem he made Laon and Cythna brother and sister, not because he believed in the desirability of incest, but because he wished to throw a glove down to society, and to attack the intolerance of custom in its stronghold. In the preface, he tells us that it was his purpose to kindle in the bosoms of his readers “a virtuous enthusiasm for those doctrines of liberty and justice, that

faith and hope in something good, which neither violence nor misrepresentation, nor prejudice, can ever wholly extinguish among mankind;" to illustrate "the growth and progress of individual mind aspiring after excellence, and devoted to the love of mankind;" and to celebrate Love "as the sole law which should govern the moral world." The wild romantic treatment of this didactic motive makes the poem highly characteristic of its author. It is written in Spenserian stanzas, with a rapidity of movement and a dazzling brilliance that are Shelley's own. The story relates the kindling of a nation to freedom at the cry of a young poet-prophet, the temporary triumph of the good cause, the final victory of despotic force, and the martyrdom of the hero, together with whom the heroine falls a willing victim. It is full of thrilling incidents and lovely pictures; yet the tale is the least part of the poem; and few readers have probably been able either to sympathize with its visionary characters, or to follow the narrative without weariness. As in the case of other poems by Shelley — especially those in which he attempted to tell a story, for which kind of art his genius was not well suited — the central motive of "Laon and Cythna" is surrounded by so radiant a photosphere of imagery and eloquence that it is difficult to fix our gaze upon it, blinded as we are by the excess of splendour. Yet no one now can read the terrible tenth canto, or the lovely fifth, without feeling that a young eagle of poetry had here tried the full strength of his pinions in their flight. This truth was by no means recognized when "Laon and Cythna" first appeared before the public. Hooted down, derided, stigmatized, and howled at, it only served to intensify the prejudice with which the author of "Queen Mab" had come to be regarded.

I have spoken of this poem under its first name of "Laon and Cythna". A certain number of copies were issued with this title (How many copies were put in circulation is not known. There must certainly have been many more than the traditional three; for when I was a boy at Harrow, I picked up two uncut copies in boards at a Bristol bookshop, for the price of 2 shillings and 6 pence a piece.); but the publisher, Ollier, not without reason dreaded the effect the book would make; he therefore induced Shelley to alter the relationship between the hero and his bride, and issued the old sheets with certain cancelled pages under the title of "Revolt of Islam". It was published in January, 1818. While still resident at Marlow, Shelley began two autobiographical poems — the one "Prince Athanase," which he

abandoned as too introspective and morbidly self-analytical, the other, "Rosalind and Helen", which he finished afterwards in Italy. Of the second of these compositions he entertained a poor opinion; nor will it bear comparison with his best work. To his biographer its chief interest consists in the character of Lionel, drawn less perhaps exactly from himself than as an ideal of the man he would have wished to be. The poet in "Alastor", Laon in the "Revolt of Islam", Lionel in "Rosalind and Helen", and Prince Athanase, are in fact a remarkable row of self-portraits, varying in the tone and scale of idealistic treatment bestowed upon them. Later on in life, Shelley outgrew this preoccupation with his idealized self, and directed his genius to more objective themes. Yet the autobiographic tendency, as befitted a poet of the highest lyric type, remained to the end a powerful characteristic.

Before quitting the first period of Shelley's development, it may be well to set before the reader a specimen of that self-delineative poetry which characterized it; and since it is difficult to detach a single passage from the continuous stanzas of "Laon and Cythna", I have chosen the lines in "Rosalind and Helen" which describe young Lionel:

To Lionel,
Though of great wealth and lineage high,
Yet through those dungeon walls there came
Thy thrilling light, O Liberty!
And as the meteor's midnight flame
Startles the dreamer, sun-like truth
Flashed on his visionary youth,
And filled him, not with love, but faith.
And hope, and courage mute in death;
For love and life in him were twins,
Born at one birth: in every other
First life, then love its course begins,
Though they be children of one mother;
And so through this dark world they fleet
Divided, till in death they meet:
But he loved all things ever. Then
He past amid the strife of men,
And stood at the throne of armed power

Pleading for a world of woe:
Secure as one on a rock-built tower
O’er the wrecks which the surge trails to and fro,
‘Mid the passions wild of human kind
He stood, like a spirit calming them;
For, it was said, his words could find
Like music the lulled crowd, and stem
That torrent of unquiet dream,
Which mortals truth and reason deem,
But IS revenge and fear and pride.
Joyous he was; and hope and peace
On all who heard him did abide,
Raining like dew from his sweet talk,
As where the evening star may walk
Along the brink of the gloomy seas,
Liquid mists of splendour quiver.
His very gestures touch’d to tears
The unpersuaded tyrant, never
So moved before: his presence stung
The torturers with their victim’s pain,
And none knew how; and through their ears,
The subtle witchcraft of his tongue
Unlocked the hearts of those who keep
Gold, the world’s bond of slavery.
Men wondered, and some sneer’d to see
One sow what he could never reap:
For he is rich, they said, and young,
And might drink from the depths of luxury.
If he seeks Fame, Fame never crown’d
The champion of a trampled creed:
If he seeks Power, Power is enthroned
‘Mid ancient rights and wrongs, to feed
Which hungry wolves with praise and spoil,
Those who would sit near Power must toil;
And such, there sitting, all may see.

During the year he spent at Marlow, Shelley was a frequent visitor at Leigh Hunt's Hampstead house, where he made acquaintance with Keats, and the brothers Smith, authors of "Rejected Addresses". Hunt's recollections supply some interesting details, which, since Hogg and Peacock fail us at this period, may be profitably used. Describing the manner of his life at Marlow, Hunt writes as follows: "He rose early in the morning, walked and read before breakfast, took that meal sparingly, wrote and studied the greater part of the morning, walked and read again, dined on vegetables (for he took neither meat nor wine), conversed with his friends (to whom his house was ever open) again walked out, and usually finished with reading to his wife till ten o'clock, when he went to bed. This was his daily existence. His book was generally Plato, or Homer, or one of the Greek tragedians, or the Bible, in which last he took a great, though peculiar, and often admiring interest. One of his favourite parts was the book of Job." Mrs. Shelley, in her note on the "Revolt of Islam", confirms this account of his Bible studies; and indeed the influence of the Old Testament upon his style may be traced in several of his poems. In the same paragraph from which I have just quoted, Leigh Hunt gives a just notion of his relation to Christianity, pointing out that he drew a distinction between the Pauline presentation of the Christian creeds, and the spirit of the Gospels. "His want of faith in the letter, and his exceeding faith in the spirit of Christianity, formed a comment, the one on the other, very formidable to those who chose to forget what Scripture itself observes on that point." We have only to read Shelley's "Essay on Christianity", in order to perceive what reverent admiration he felt for Jesus, and how profoundly he understood the true character of his teaching. That work, brief as it is, forms one of the most valuable extant contributions to a sound theology, and is morally far in advance of the opinions expressed by many who regard themselves as specially qualified to speak on the subject. It is certain that, as Christianity passes beyond its mediaeval phase, and casts aside the husk of outworn dogmas, it will more and more approximate to Shelley's exposition. Here and here only is a vital faith, adapted to the conditions of modern thought, indestructible because essential, and fitted to unite instead of separating minds of divers quality. It may sound paradoxical to claim for Shelley of all men a clear insight into the enduring element of the Christian creed; but it was precisely his detachment from all its accidents which enabled him to discern its spiritual purity, and placed him in a true relation

to its Founder. For those who would neither on the one hand relinquish what is permanent in religion, nor yet on the other deny the inevitable conclusions of modern thought, his teaching is indubitably valuable. His fierce tirades against historic Christianity must be taken as directed against an ecclesiastical system of spiritual tyranny, hypocrisy, and superstition, which in his opinion had retarded the growth of free institutions, and fettered the human intellect. Like Campanella, he distinguished between Christ, who sealed the gospel of charity with his blood, and those Christians, who would be the first to crucify their Lord if he returned to earth.

That Shelley lived up to his religious creed is amply proved. To help the needy and to relieve the sick, seemed to him a simple duty, which he cheerfully discharged. “His charity, though liberal, was not weak. He inquired personally into the circumstances of his petitioners, visited the sick in their beds,....and kept a regular list of industrious poor, whom he assisted with small sums to make up their accounts.” At Marlow, the miserable condition of the lace-makers called forth all his energies; and Mrs. Shelley tells us that an acute ophthalmia, from which he twice suffered, was contracted in a visit to their cottages. A story told by Leigh Hunt about his finding a woman ill on Hampstead Heath, and carrying her from door to door in the vain hopes of meeting with a man as charitable as himself, until he had to house the poor creature with his friends the Hunts, reads like a practical illustration of Christ’s parable about the Good Samaritan. Nor was it merely to the so-called poor that Shelley showed his generosity. His purse was always open to his friends. Peacock received from him an annual allowance of 100 pounds. He gave Leigh Hunt, on one occasion, 1400 pounds; and he discharged debts of Godwin, amounting, it is said, to about 6000 pounds. In his pamphlet on “Putting Reform to the Vote”, he offered to subscribe 100 pounds for the purpose of founding an association; and we have already seen that he headed the Tremadoc subscription with a sum of 500 pounds. These instances of his generosity might be easily multiplied; and when we remember that his present income was 1000 pounds, out of which 200 pounds went to the support of his children, it will be understood not only that he could not live luxuriously, but also that he was in frequent money difficulties through the necessity of raising funds upon his expectations. His self-denial in all minor matters of expenditure was conspicuous. Without a murmur, without ostentation, this heir of the richest

baronet in Sussex illustrated by his own conduct those principles of democratic simplicity and of fraternal charity which formed his political and social creed.

A glimpse into the cottage at Great Marlow is afforded by a careless sentence of Leigh Hunt's. "He used to sit in a study adorned with casts, as large as life, of the Vatican Apollo and the celestial Venus." Fancy Shelley with his bright eyes and elf-locks in a tiny, low-roofed room, correcting proofs of "Laon and Cythna", between the Apollo of the Belvedere and Venus de' Medici, life-sized, and as crude as casts by Shout could make them! In this house, Miss Clairmont, with her brother and Allegra, lived as Shelley's guests; and here Clara Shelley was born on the 3rd of September, 1817. In the same autumn, Shelley suffered from a severe pulmonary attack. The critical state of his health, and the apprehension, vouched for by Mrs. Shelley, that the Chancellor might lay his vulture's talons on the children of his second marriage, were the motives which induced him to leave England for Italy in the spring of 1818. (See Note on Poems of 1819, and compare the lyric "The billows on the beach.") He never returned. Four years only of life were left to him — years filled with music that will sound as long as English lasts.

It was on the 11th of March that the Shelleys took their departure with Miss Clairmont and the child Allegra. They went straight to Milan, and after visiting the Lake of Como, Pisa, the Bagni di Lucca, Venice and Rome, they settled early in the following December at Naples. Shelley's letters to Peacock form the invaluable record of this period of his existence. Taken altogether, they are the most perfect specimens of descriptive prose in the English language; never over-charged with colour, vibrating with emotions excited by the stimulating scenes of Italy, frank in their criticism, and exquisitely delicate in observation. Their transparent sincerity and unpremeditated grace, combined with natural finish of expression, make them masterpieces of a style at once familiar and elevated. That Shelley's sensibility to art was not so highly cultivated as his feeling for nature, is clear enough in many passages: but there is no trace of admiring to order in his comments upon pictures or statues. Familiarity with the great works of antique and Italian art would doubtless have altered some of the opinions he at first expressed; just as longer residence among the people made him modify his views about their character. Meanwhile, the spirit of modest and unprejudiced attention in which he began his studies of sculpture and

painting, might well be imitated in the present day by travellers who think that to pin their faith to some famous critic's verdict is the acme of good taste. If there were space for a long quotation from these letters, I should choose the description of Pompeii (January 26, 1819), or that of the Baths of Caracalla (March 23, 1819). As it is, I must content myself with a short but eminently characteristic passage, written from Ferrarra, November 7, 1818: —

"The handwriting of Ariosto is a small, firm, and pointed character, expressing, as I should say, a strong and keen, but circumscribed energy of mind; that of Tasso is large, free, and flowing, except that there is a checked expression in the midst of its flow, which brings the letters into a smaller compass than one expected from the beginning of the word. It is the symbol of an intense and earnest mind, exceeding at times its own depth, and admonished to return by the chillness of the waters of oblivion striking upon its adventurous feet. You know I always seek in what I see the manifestation of something beyond the present and tangible object; and as we do not agree in physiognomy, so we may not agree now. But my business is to relate my own sensations, and not to attempt to inspire others with them."

In the middle of August, Shelley left his wife at the Bagni di Lucca, and paid a visit to Lord Byron at Venice. He arrived at midnight in a thunderstorm. "Julian and Maddalo" was the literary fruit of this excursion — a poem which has rightly been characterized by Mr. Rossetti as the most perfect specimen in our language of the "poetical treatment of ordinary things." The description of a Venetian sunset, touched to sadness amid all its splendour by the gloomy presence of the madhouse, ranks among Shelley's finest word-paintings; while the glimpse of Byron's life is interesting on a lower level. Here is the picture of the sunset and the island of San Lazzaro: —

Oh!
How beautiful is sunset, when the glow
Of heaven descends upon a land like thee,
Thou paradise of exiles, Italy,
Thy mountains, seas, and vineyards, and the towers
Of cities they encircle! — it was ours
To stand on thee, beholding it: and then,

Just where we had dismounted, the Count's men
Were waiting for us with the gondola.
As those who pause on some delightful way,
Though bent on pleasant pilgrimage, we stood
Looking upon the evening, and the flood
Which lay between the city and the shore,
Paved with the image of the sky. The hoar
And airy Alps, towards the north, appeared,
Thro' mist, a heaven-sustaining bulwark, reared
Between the east and west; and half the sky
Was roofed with clouds of rich emblazonry,
Dark purple at the zenith, which still grew
Down the steep west into a wondrous hue
Brighter than burning gold, even to the rent
Where the swift sun yet paused in his descent
Among the many-folded hills. They were
Those famous Euganean hills, which bear,
As seem from Lido through the harbour piles,
The likeness of a clump of peaked isles —
And then, as if the earth and sea had been
Dissolved into one lake of fire, were seen
Those mountains towering, as from waves of flame,
Around the vaporous sun, from which there came
The inmost purple spirit of light, and made
Their very peaks transparent. "Ere it fade,"
Said my companion, "I will show you soon
A better station." So o'er the lagune
We glided; and from that funereal bark
I leaned, and saw the city, and could mark
How from their many isles, in evening's gleam,
Its temples and its palaces did seem
Like fabrics of enchantment piled to heaven.
I was about to speak, when—"We are even
Now at the point I meant," said Maddalo,
And bade the gondolieri cease to row.
"Look, Julian, on the west, and listen well
If you hear not a deep and heavy bell."

I looked, and saw between us and the sun
A building on an island, such a one
As age to age might add, for uses vile, —
A windowless, deformed, and dreary pile;
And on the top an open tower, where hung
A bell, which in the radiance swayed and swung, —
We could just hear its coarse and iron tongue:
The broad sun sank behind it, and it tolled
In strong and black relief—"What we behold
Shall be the madhouse and its belfry tower," —
Said Maddalo; "and ever at this hour,
Those who may cross the water hear that bell,
Which calls the maniacs, each one from his cell,
To vespers."

It may be parenthetically observed that one of the few familiar quotations from Shelley's poems occurs in "Julian and Maddalo": —

Most wretched men
Are cradled into poetry by wrong:
They learn in suffering what they teach in song.

Byron lent the Shelleys his villa of the Cappuccini near Este, where they spent some weeks in the autumn. Here "Prometheus Unbound" was begun, and the "Lines written among the Euganean Hills" were composed; and here Clara became so ill that her parents thought it necessary to rush for medical assistance to Venice. They had forgotten their passport; but Shelley's irresistible energy overcame all difficulties, and they entered Venice — only in time, however, for the child to die.

Nearly the whole of the winter was spent in Naples, where Shelley suffered from depression of more than ordinary depth. Mrs. Shelley attributed this gloom to the state of his health, but Medwin tells a strange story, which, if it is not wholly a romance, may better account for the poet's melancholy. He says that so far back as the year 1816, on the night before his departure from London, "a married lady, young, handsome, and of noble connexions," came to him, avowed the passionate love she had conceived for him, and proposed that they should fly together. (Medwin's Life of

Shelley, volume 1 324. His date, 1814, appears from the context to be a misprint.) He explained to her that his hand and heart had both been given irrevocably to another, and, after the expression of the most exalted sentiments on both sides, they parted. She followed him, however, from place to place; and without intruding herself upon his notice, found some consolation in remaining near him. Now she arrived at Naples; and at Naples she died. The web of Shelley's life was a wide one, and included more destinies than his own. Godwin, as we have reason to believe, attributed the suicide of Fanny Imlay to her hopeless love for Shelley; and the tale of Harriet has already been told. Therefore there is nothing absolutely improbable in Medwin's story, especially when we remember what Hogg half-humorously tells us about Shelley's attraction for women in London. At any rate, the excessive wretchedness of the lyrics written at Naples can hardly be accounted for by the "constant and poignant physical sufferings" of which Mrs. Shelley speaks, since these were habitual with him. She was herself, moreover under the impression that he was concealing something from her, and we know from her own words in another place that his "fear to wound the feelings of others" often impelled him to keep his deepest sorrows to himself. (Note on the Revolt of Islam.)

All this while his health was steadily improving. The menace of consumption was removed; and though he suffered from severe attacks of pain in the side, the cause of this persistent malady does not seem to have been ascertained. At Naples he was under treatment for disease of the liver. Afterwards, his symptoms were ascribed to nephritis, and it is certain that his greater or less freedom from uneasiness varied with the quality of the water he drank. He was, for instance, forced to eschew the drinking water of Ravenna, because it aggravated his symptoms; while Florence, for a similar reason, proved an unsuitable residence. The final settlement of the Shelleys at Pisa seems to have been determined by the fact that the water of that place agreed with him. That the spasms which from time to time attacked him were extremely serious, is abundantly proved by the testimony of those who lived with him at this period, and by his own letters. Some relief was obtained by mesmerism, a remedy suggested by Medwin; but the obstinacy of the torment preyed upon his spirits to such an extent, that even during the last months of his life we find him begging Trelawny to procure him prussic acid as a final and effectual remedy for all the ills that flesh is heir to. It may be added that mental application increased the mischief, for he told

Leigh Hunt that the composition of "The Cenci" had cost him a fresh seizure. Yet though his sufferings were indubitably real, the eminent physician, Vacca, could discover no organic disease; and possibly Trelawny came near the truth when he attributed Shelley's spasms to insufficient and irregular diet, and to a continual over-taxing of his nervous system.

Mrs. Shelley states that the change from England to Italy was in all respects beneficial to her husband. She was inclined to refer the depression from which he occasionally suffered, to his solitary habits; and there are several passages in his own letters which connect his melancholy with solitude. It is obvious that when he found himself in the congenial company of Trelawny, Williams, Medwin, or the Gisbornes, he was simply happy; and nothing could be further from the truth than to paint him as habitually sunk in gloom. On the contrary, we hear quite as much about his high spirits, his "Homeric laughter," his playfulness with children, his readiness to join in the amusements of his chosen circle, and his incomparable conversation, as we do about his solitary broodings, and the seasons when pain or bitter memories over-cast his heaven. Byron, who had some right to express a judgment in such a matter, described him as the most companionable man under the age of thirty he had ever met with. Shelley rode and practised pistol-shooting with his brother bard, sat up late to talk with him, enjoyed his jokes, and even betted with him on one occasion marked by questionable taste. All this is quite incompatible with that martyrdom to persecution, remorse, or physical suffering, with which it has pleased some romantic persons to invest the poet. Society of the ordinary kind he hated. The voice of a stranger, or a ring at the house-bell, heard from afar with Shelley's almost inconceivable quickness of perception, was enough to make him leave the house; and one of his prettiest poems is written on his mistaking his wife's mention of the Aziola, a little owl common enough in Tuscany, for an allusion to a tiresome visitor. This dislike for intercourse with commonplace people was a source of some disagreement between him and Mrs. Shelley, and kept him further apart from Byron than he might otherwise have been. In a valuable letter recently published by Mr. Garnett, he writes:—"I detest all society — almost all, at least — and Lord Byron is the nucleus of all that is hateful and tiresome in it." And again, speaking about his wife to Trelawny, he said:—"She can't bear solitude, nor I society — the quick coupled with the dead."

In the year 1818-19 the Shelleys had no friends at all in Italy, except Lord Byron at Venice, and Mr. and Mrs. John Gisborne at Leghorn. Mrs. Gisborne had been a friend of Mary Wollstonecraft and Godwin. She was a woman of much cultivation, devoid of prejudice, and, though less enthusiastic than Shelley liked, quite capable of appreciating the inestimable privilege of his acquaintance. Her husband, to use a now almost obsolete phrase, was a scholar and a gentleman. He shared his wife's enlightened opinions, and remained staunch through good and ill report to his new friends. At Rome and Naples they knew absolutely no one. Shelley's time was therefore passed in study and composition. In the previous summer he had translated the "Symposium" of Plato, and begun an essay on the Ethics of the Greeks, which remains unluckily a fragment. Together with Mary he read much Italian literature, and his observations on the chief Italian poets form a valuable contribution to their criticism. While he admired the splendour and invention of Ariosto, he could not tolerate his moral tone. Tasso struck him as cold and artificial, in spite of his "delicate moral sensibility." Boccaccio he preferred to both; and his remarks on this prose-poet are extremely characteristic. "How much do I admire Boccaccio! What descriptions of nature are those in his little introductions to every new day! It is the morning of life stripped of that mist of familiarity which makes it obscure to us. Boccaccio seems to me to have possessed a deep sense of the fair ideal of human life, considered in its social relations. His more serious theories of love agree especially with mine. He often expresses things lightly too, which have serious meanings of a very beautiful kind. He is a moral casuist, the opposite of the Christian, stoical, ready-made, and worldly system of morals. Do you remember one little remark, or rather maxim of his, which might do some good to the common, narrow-minded conceptions of love,—'Bocca baciata non perde ventura; anzi rinnouva, come fa la luna'?" Dante and Petrarch remained the objects of his lasting admiration, though the cruel Christianity of the "Inferno" seemed to him an ineradicable blot upon the greatest of Italian poems. Of Petrarch's "tender and solemn enthusiasm," he speaks with the sympathy of one who understood the inner mysteries of idealizing love.

It will be gathered from the foregoing quotations that Shelley, notwithstanding is profound study of style and his exquisite perception of beauty in form and rhythm, required more than merely artistic excellences in poetry. He judged poems by their content and spirit; and while he plainly

expressed his abhorrence of the didactic manner, he held that art must be moralized in order to be truly great. The distinction he drew between Theocritus and the earlier Greek singers in the "Defence of Poetry", his severe strictures on "The Two Noble Kinsmen" in a letter to Mary (August 20, 1818) and his phrase about Ariosto, "who is entertaining and graceful, and SOMETIMES a poet," illustrate the application of critical canons wholly at variance with the "art for art" doctrine.

While studying Italian, he continued faithful to Greek. Plato was often in his hands, and the dramatists formed his almost inseparable companions. How deeply he felt the art of the Homeric poems, may be gathered from the following extract:—"I congratulate you on your conquest of the Iliad. You must have been astonished at the perpetually increasing magnificence of the last seven books. Homer there truly begins to be himself. The battle of the Scamander, the funeral of Patroclus, and the high and solemn close of the whole bloody tale in tenderness and inexpiable sorrow, are wrought in a manner incomparable with anything of the same kind. The Odyssey is sweet, but there is nothing like this." About this time, prompted by Mrs. Gisborne, he began the study of Spanish, and conceived an ardent admiration for Calderon, whose splendid and supernatural fancy tallied with his own. "I am bathing myself in the light and odour of the starry Autos," he writes to Mr. Gisborne in the autumn of 1820. "Faust", too, was a favourite. "I have been reading over and over again "Faust", and always with sensations which no other composition excites. It deepens the gloom and augments the rapidity of ideas, and would therefore seem to me an unfit study for any person who is a prey to the reproaches of memory, and the delusions of an imagination not to be restrained." The profound impression made upon him by Margaret's story is expressed in two letters about Retzsch's illustrations:—"The artist makes one envy his happiness that he can sketch such things with calmness, which I only dared look upon once, and which made my brain swim round only to touch the leaf on the opposite side of which I knew that it was figured."

The fruits of this occupation with Greek, Italian, Spanish, and German were Shelley's translations from Homer and Euripides, from Dante, from Calderon's "Magico Prodigioso", and from "Faust", translations which have never been surpassed for beauty of form and complete transfusion of the spirit of one literature into the language of another. On translation, however, he set but little store, asserting that he only undertook it when he "could do

absolutely nothing else," and writing earnestly to dissuade Leigh Hunt from devoting time which might be better spent, to work of subordinate importance. (Letter from Florence, November 1819.) The following version of a Greek epigram on Plato's spirit will illustrate his own method of translation: —

Eagle! why soarest thou above that tomb?
To what sublime and star-y-paven home
Floatest thou?
I am the image of swift Plato's spirit,
Ascending heaven: — Athens does inherit
His corpse below.

Some time in the year 1820-21, he composed the "Defence of Poetry", stimulated to this undertaking by his friend Peacock's article on poetry, published in the Literary Miscellany. (See Letter to Ollier, January 20, 1820, Shelley Memorials, page 135.) This essay not only sets forth his theory of his own art, but it also contains some of his finest prose writing, of which the following passage, valuable alike for matter and style, may be cited as a specimen: —

"The functions of the poetical faculty are two-fold; by one it creates new materials of knowledge, and power, and pleasure; by the other it engenders in the mind a desire to reproduce and arrange them according to a certain rhythm and order which may be called the beautiful and the good. The cultivation of poetry is never more to be desired than at periods when, from an excess of the selfish and calculating principle, the accumulation of the materials of external life exceed the quantity of the power of assimilating them to the internal laws of human nature. The body has then become too unwieldy for that which animates it.

"Poetry is indeed something divine. It is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred. It is at the same time the root and blossom of all other systems of thought; it is that from which all spring, and that which adorns all; and that which, if blighted, denies the fruit and the seed, and withholds from the barren world the nourishment and the succession of the scions of the tree of life. It is the perfect and consummate surface and bloom of all things; it is as the odour and the colour of the rose

to the texture of the elements which compose it, as the form and splendour of unfaded beauty to the secrets of anatomy and corruption. What were virtue, love, patriotism, friendship — what were the scenery of this beautiful universe which we inhabit — what were our consolations on this side of the grave — and what were our aspirations beyond it, if poetry did not ascend to bring light and fire from those eternal regions where the owl-winged faculty of calculation dare not ever soar? Poetry is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will. A man cannot say, "I will compose poetry." The greatest poet even cannot say it; for the mind in creation is as a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness; this power arises from within, like the colour of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed, and the conscious portions of our natures are unprophetic either of its approach or its departure. Could this influence be durable in its original purity and force, it is impossible to predict the greatness of the results; but when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conceptions of the poet. I appeal to the greatest poets of the present day, whether it is not an error to assert that the finest passages of poetry are produced by labour and study. The toil and the delay recommended by critics, can be justly interpreted to mean no more than a careful observation of the inspired moments, and an artificial connexion of the spaces between their suggestions by the intermixture of conventional expressions; a necessity only imposed by the limitedness of the poetical faculty itself; for Milton conceived the "Paradise Lost" as a whole before he executed it in portions. We have his own authority also for the muse having "dictated" to him the "unpremeditated song." And let this be an answer to those who would allege the fifty-six various readings of the first line of the "Orlando Furioso." Compositions so produced are to poetry what mosaic is to painting. This instinct and intuition of the poetical faculty is still more observable in the plastic and pictorial arts; a great statue or picture grows under the power of the artist as a child in the mother's womb; and the very mind which directs the hands in formation is incapable of accounting to itself for the origin, the gradations, or the media of the process.

"Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds. We are aware of evanescent visitations of thought and

feeling sometimes associated with place or person, sometimes regarding our own mind alone, and always arising unforeseen and departing unbidden, but elevating and delightful beyond all expression: so that even in the desire and the regret they leave, there cannot but be pleasure, participating as it does in the nature of its object. It is as it were the interpenetration of a diviner nature through our own; but its footsteps are like those of a wind over the sea, which the coming calm erases, and whose traces remain only, as on the wrinkled sand which paves it. These and corresponding conditions of being are experienced principally by those of the most delicate sensibility and the most enlarged imagination; and the state of mind produced by them is at war with every base desire. The enthusiasm of virtue, love, patriotism, and friendship, is essentially linked with such emotions; and whilst they last, self appears as what it is, an atom to a universe. Poets are not only subject to these experiences as spirits of the most refined organization, but they can colour all that they combine with the evanescent hues of this ethereal world; a word, a trait in the representation of a scene or a passion, will touch the enchanted chord, and reanimate, in those who have ever experienced these emotions, the sleeping, the cold, the buried image of the past. Poetry thus makes immortal all that is best and most beautiful in the world; it arrests the vanishing apparitions which haunt the interlunations of life, and veiling them, or in language or in form, sends them forth among mankind, bearing sweet news of kindred joy to those with whom their sisters abide — abide, because there is no portal of expression from the caverns of the spirit which they inhabit into the universe of things. Poetry redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man."

In the midst of these aesthetic studies, and while producing his own greatest works, Shelley was not satisfied that his genius ought to be devoted to poetry. "I consider poetry," he wrote to Peacock, January 26th, 1819, "very subordinate to moral and political science, and if I were well, certainly I would aspire to the latter; for I can conceive a great work, embodying the discoveries of all ages, and harmonizing the contending creeds by which mankind have been ruled. Far from me is such an attempt, and I shall be content, by exercising my fancy, to amuse myself, and perhaps some others, and cast what weight I can into the scale of that balance which the Giant of Arthegall holds." Whether he was right in the conviction that his genius was no less fitted for metaphysical speculation or for political science than for poetry, is a question that admits of much

debate. (See Mrs. Shelley's note on the Revolt of Islam, and the whole Preface to the Prose Works.) We have nothing but fragments whereby to form a definite opinion — the unfinished "Defence of Poetry", the unfinished "Essay on a Future State", the unfinished "Essay on Christianity", the unfinished "Essay on the Punishment of Death", and the scattered "Speculations on Metaphysics". None of these compositions justify the belief so confidently expressed by Mrs. Shelley in her Preface to the prose works, that "had not Shelley deserted metaphysics for poetry in his youth, and had he not been lost to us early, so that all his vaster projects were wrecked with him in the waves, he would have presented the world with a complete theory of mind; a theory to which Berkeley, Coleridge, and Kant would have contributed; but more simple, and unimpugnable, and entire than the systems of these writers." Their incompleteness rather tends to confirm what she proceeds to state, that the strain of philosophical composition was too great for his susceptible nerves; while her further observation that "thought kindled imagination and awoke sensation, and rendered him dizzy from too great keenness of emotion," seems to indicate that his nature was primarily that of a poet deeply tinctured with philosophical speculation, rather than that of a metaphysician warmed at intervals to an imaginative fervour. Another of her remarks confirms us in this opinion. "He considered these philosophical views of mind and nature to be instinct with the intensest spirit of poetry." (Note on Prometheus.) This is the position of the poet rather than the analyst; and on the whole, we are probably justified in concluding with Mrs. Shelley, that he followed a true instinct when he dedicated himself to poetry, and trained his powers in that direction. (Note on Revolt of Islam.) To dogmatize upon the topic would be worse than foolish. There was something incalculable, incommensurable, and daemonic in Shelley's genius; and what he might have achieved, had his life been spared and had his health progressively improved, it is of course impossible to say.

In the spring of 1819 the Shelleys settled in Rome, where the poet proceeded with the composition of "Prometheus Unbound". He used to write among the ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, not then, as now, despoiled of all their natural beauty, but waving with the Paradise of flowers and shrubs described in his incomparable letter of March the 23rd to Peacock. Rome, however, was not destined to retain them long. On the 7th of June they lost their son William after a short illness. Shelley loved this child

intensely, and sat by his bedside for sixty hours without taking rest. He was now practically childless; and his grief found expression in many of his poems, especially in the fragment headed "Roma, Roma, Roma! non e piu com' era prima." William was buried in the Protestant cemetery, of which Shelley had written a description to Peacock in the previous December. "The English burying-place is a green slope near the walls, under the pyramidal tomb of Cestius, and is, I think, the most beautiful and solemn cemetery I ever beheld. To see the sun shining on its bright grass, fresh, when we first visited it, with the autumnal dews, and hear the whispering of the wind among the leaves of the trees which have overgrown the tomb of Cestius, and the soil which is stirring in the sun-warm earth, and to mark the tombs, mostly of women and young people who were buried there, one might, if one were to die, desire the sleep they seem to sleep. Such is the human mind, and so it peoples with its wishes vacancy and oblivion."

Escaping from the scene of so much sorrow, they established themselves at the Villa Valsovano, near Leghorn. Here Shelley began and finished "The Cenci" at the instance of his wife, who rightly thought that he undervalued his own powers as a dramatic poet. The supposed portrait of Beatrice in the Barberini Palace had powerfully affected his imagination, and he fancied that her story would form the fitting subject for a tragedy. It is fortunate for English literature that the real facts of that domestic drama, as recently published by Signor Bertolotti, were then involved in a tissue of romance and legend. During this summer he saw a great deal of the Gisborne family. Mrs. Gisborne's son by a previous marriage, Henry Reveley, was an engineer, and Shelley conceived a project of helping him build a steamer which should ply between Leghorn and Marseilles. He was to supply the funds, and the pecuniary profit was to be shared by the Gisborne family. The scheme eventually fell through, though Shelley spent a good deal of money upon it; and its only importance is the additional light it throws upon his public and private benevolence. From Leghorn the Shelleys removed in the autumn to Florence, where, on the 12th of November, the present Sir Percy Florence Shelley was born. Here Shelley wrote the last act of "Prometheus Unbound", which, though the finest portion of that unique drama, seems to have been an afterthought. In the Cascine outside Florence he also composed the "Ode to the West Wind", the most symmetrically perfect as well as the most impassioned of his minor lyrics. He spent much time in the galleries, made notes upon the principal antique statues, and

formed a plan of systematic art-study. The climate, however, disagreed with him, and in the month of January, 1820, they took up their abode at Pisa.

1819 was the most important year in Shelley's life, so far as literary production is concerned. Besides "The Cenci" and "Prometheus Unbound", of which it yet remains to speak, this year saw the production of several political and satirical poems — the "Masque of Anarchy", suggested by the news of the Peterloo massacre, being by far the most important. Shelley attempted the composition of short popular songs which should stir the English people to a sense of what he felt to be their degradation. But he lacked the directness which alone could make such verses forcible, and the passionate apostrophe to the Men of England in his "Masque of Anarchy" marks the highest point of his achievement in this style: —

Men of England, Heirs of Glory,
Heroes of unwritten story,
Nurslings of one mighty mother,
Hopes of her, and one another!

Rise, like lions after slumber,
In unvanquishable number,
Shake your chains to earth like dew,
Which in sleep had fall'n on you.
Ye are many, they are few.

"Peter Bell the Third", written in this year, and "Swellfoot the Tyrant", composed in the following autumn, are remarkable as showing with what keen interest Shelley watched public affairs in England from his exile home; but, for my own part, I cannot agree with those critics who esteem their humour at a high rate. The political poems may profitably be compared with his contemporary correspondence; with the letters, for instance, to Leigh Hunt, November 23rd, 1819; and to Mr. John Gisborne, April 10th, 1822; and with an undated fragment published by Mr. Garnett in the "Relics of Shelley", page 84. No student of English political history before the Reform Bill can regard his apprehensions of a great catastrophe as ill-founded. His insight into the real danger to the nation was as penetrating as his suggestion of a remedy was moderate. Those who are accustomed to think of the poet as a visionary enthusiast, will rub their eyes

when they read the sober lines in which he warns his friend to be cautious about the security offered by the English Funds. Another letter, dated Lerici, June 29, 1822, illustrates the same practical temper of mind, the same logical application of political principles to questions of public economy.

That "Prometheus Unbound" and "The Cenci" should have been composed in one and the same year must be reckoned among the greatest wonders of literature, not only because of their sublime greatness, but also because of their essential difference. Aeschylus, it is well known, had written a sequel to his "Prometheus Bound", in which he showed the final reconciliation between Zeus, the oppressor, and Prometheus, the champion, of humanity. What that reconciliation was, we do not know, because the play is lost, and the fragments are too brief for supporting any probable hypothesis. But Shelley repudiated the notion of compromise. He could not conceive of the Titan "unsaying his high language, and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary." He therefore, approached the theme of liberation from a wholly different point of view. Prometheus in his drama is the human vindicator of love, justice, and liberty, as opposed to Jove, the tyrannical oppressor, and creator of all evil by his selfish rule. Prometheus is the mind of man idealized, the spirit of our race, as Shelley thought it made to be. Jove is the incarnation of all that thwarts its free development. Thus counterposed, the two chief actors represent the fundamental antitheses of good and evil, liberty and despotism, love and hate. They give the form of personality to Shelley's Ormuzd-Ahriman dualism already expressed in the first canto of "Laon and Cythna"; but, instead of being represented on the theatre of human life, the strife is now removed into the reign of abstractions, vivified by mythopoetry. Prometheus resists Jove to the uttermost, endures all torments, physical and moral, that the tyrant plagues him with, secure in his own strength, and calmly expectant of an hour which shall hurl Jove from heaven, and leave the spirit of good triumphant. That hour arrives; Jove disappears; the burdens of the world and men are suddenly removed; a new age of peace and freedom and illimitable energy begins; the whole universe partakes in the emancipation; the spirit of the earth no longer groans in pain, but sings alternate love-songs with his sister orb, the moon; Prometheus is re-united in indissoluble bonds to his old love, Asia. Asia, withdrawn from sight during the first act, but spoken of as waiting in her exile for the fated hour, is the true mate of the human spirit. She is the fairest daughter of Earth and Ocean. Like

Aphrodite, she rises in the Aegean near the land called by her name; and in the time of tribulation she dwells in a far Indian vale. She is the Idea of Beauty incarnate, the shadow of the Light of Life which sustains the world and enkindles it with love, the reality of Alastor's vision, the breathing image of the awful loveliness apostrophized in the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," the reflex of the splendour of which Adonais was a part. At the moment of her triumph she grows so beautiful that Ione her sister cannot see her, only feels her influence. The essential thought of Shelley's creed was that the universe is penetrated, vitalized, made real by a spirit, which he sometimes called the spirit of Nature, but which is always conceived as more than Life, as that which gives its actuality to Life, and lastly as Love and Beauty. To adore this spirit, to clasp it with affection, and to blend with it, is, he thought the true object of man. Therefore the final union of Prometheus with Asia is the consummation of human destinies. Love was the only law Shelley recognized. Unterrified by the grim realities of pain and crime revealed in nature and society, he held fast to the belief that, if we could but pierce to the core of things, if we could but be what we might be, the world and man would both attain to their perfection in eternal love. What resolution through some transcendental harmony was expected by Shelley for the palpable discords in the structure of the universe, we hardly know. He did not give his philosophy systematic form: and his new science of love remains a luminous poetic vision — nowhere more brilliantly set forth than in the "sevenfold hallelujahs and harping symphonies" of this, the final triumph of his lyrical poetry.

In "Prometheus", Shelley conceived a colossal work of art, and sketched out the main figures on a scale of surpassing magnificence. While painting in these figures, he seems to reduce their proportions too much to the level of earthly life. He quits his god-creating, heaven-compelling throne of mythopoeic inspiration, and descends to a love-story of Asia and Prometheus. In other words, he does not sustain the visionary and primeval dignity of these incarnated abstractions; nor, on the other hand, has he so elaborated their characters in detail as to give them the substantiality of persons. There is therefore something vague and hollow in both figures. Yet in the subordinate passages of the poem, the true mythopoeic faculty — the faculty of finding concrete forms for thought, and of investing emotion with personality — shines forth with extraordinary force and clearness. We feel

ourselves in the grasp of a primitive myth-maker while we read the description of Oceanus, and the raptures of the Earth and Moon.

A genuine liking for "Prometheus Unbound" may be reckoned the touch-stone of a man's capacity for understanding lyric poetry. The world in which the action is supposed to move, rings with spirit voices; and what these spirits sing, is melody more purged of mortal dross than any other poet's ear has caught, while listening to his own heart's song, or to the rhythms of the world. There are hymns in "Prometheus", which seem to realize the miracle of making words, detached from meaning, the substance of a new ethereal music; and yet, although their verbal harmony is such, they are never devoid of definite significance for those who understand. Shelley scorned the aesthetics of a school which finds "sense swooning into nonsense" admirable. And if a critic is so dull as to ask what "Life of Life! thy lips enkindle" means, or to whom it is addressed, none can help him any more than one can help a man whose sense of hearing is too gross for the tenuity of a bat's cry. A voice in the air thus sings the hymn of Asia at the moment of her apotheosis: —

Life of Life! thy lips enkindle
With their love the breath between them;
And thy smiles before they dwindle
Make the cold air fire; then screen them
In those looks where whoso gazes
Faints, entangled in their mazes.

Child of Light! thy limbs are burning
Through the vest which seems to hide them,
As the radiant lines of morning
Through the clouds, ere they divide them;
And this atmosphere divinest
Shrouds thee whereso'er thou shinest.

Fair are others; none beholds thee.
But thy voice sounds low and tender,
Like the fairest, for it folds thee
From the sight, that liquid splendour,

And all feel, yet see thee never,
As I feel now, lost for ever!

Lamp of Earth! where'er thou movest
Its dim shapes are clad with brightness,
And the souls of whom thou lovest
Walk upon the winds with lightness,
Till they fail, as I am failing,
Dizzy, lost, yet unbewailing!

It has been said that Shelley, as a landscape painter, is decidedly Turneresque; and there is much in "Prometheus Unbound" to justify this opinion. The scale of colour is light and aerial, and the darker shadows are omitted. An excess of luminousness seems to be continually radiated from the objects at which he looks; and in this radiation of many-coloured lights, the outline itself is apt to be a little misty. Shelley, moreover, pierced through things to their spiritual essence. The actual world was less for him than that which lies within it and beyond it. "I seek," he says himself, "in what I see, the manifestation of something beyond the present and tangible object." For him, as for the poet described by one of the spirit voices in "Prometheus", the bees in the ivy-bloom are scarcely heeded; they become in his mind, —

Forms more real than living man,
Nurslings of immortality.

And yet who could have brought the bees, the lake, the sun, the bloom, more perfectly before us than that picture does? (Forman, volume 2 page 181.) What vignette is more exquisitely coloured and finished than the little study of a pair of halcyons in the third act? (Forman, volume 2 page 231.) Blake is perhaps the only artist who could have illustrated this drama. He might have shadowed forth the choirs of spirits, the trailing voices and their thrilling songs, phantasmal Demorgorgon, and the charioted Hour. Prometheus, too, with his "flowing limbs," has just Blake's fault of impersonation — the touch of unreality in that painter's Adam.

Passing to "The Cenci", we change at once the moral and artistic atmosphere. The lyrical element, except for one most lovely dirge, is absent. Imagery and description are alike sternly excluded. Instead of soaring to the

empyrean, our feet are firmly planted on the earth. In exchange for radiant visions of future perfection, we are brought into the sphere of dreadful passions — all the agony, endurance, and half-maddened action, of which luckless human innocence is capable. To tell the legend of Beatrice Cenci here, is hardly needed. Her father, a monster of vice and cruelty, was bent upon breaking her spirit by imprisonment, torture, and nameless outrage. At last her patience ended; and finding no redress in human justice, no champion of her helplessness in living man, she wrought his death. For this she died upon the scaffold, together with her step-mother and her brothers, who had aided in the execution of the murder. The interest of "The Cenci", and it is overwhelmingly great, centres in Beatrice and her father; from these two chief actors in the drama, all the other characters fall away into greater or less degrees of unsubstantiality. Perhaps Shelley intended this — as the maker of a bas-relief contrives two or three planes of figures for the presentation of his ruling group. Yet there appears to my mind a defect of accomplishment, rather than a deliberate intention, in the delineation of Orsino. He seems meant to be the wily, crafty, Machiavellian reptile, whose calculating wickedness should form a contrast to the daemonic, reckless, almost maniacal fiendishness of old Francesco Cenci. But this conception of him wavers; his love for Beatrice is too delicately tinted, and he is suffered to break down with an infirmity of conscience alien to such a nature. On the other hand the uneasy vacillations of Giacomo, and the irresolution, born of feminine weakness and want of fibre, in Lucrezia, serve to throw the firm will of Beatrice into prominent relief; while her innocence, sustained through extraordinary suffering in circumstances of exceptional horror — the innocence of a noble nature thrust by no act of its own but by its wrongs beyond the pale of ordinary womankind — is contrasted with the merely childish guiltlessness of Bernardo. Beatrice rises to her full height in the fifth act, dilates and grows with the approach of danger, and fills the whole scene with her spirit on the point of death. Her sublime confidence in the justice and essential rightness of her action, the glance of self-assured purity with which she annihilates the cut-throat brought to testify against her, her song in prison, and her tender solicitude for the frailer Lucrezia, are used with wonderful dramatic skill for the fulfilment of a feminine ideal at once delicate and powerful. Once and once only does she yield to ordinary weakness; it is when the thought crosses her

mind that she may meet her father in the other world, as once he came to her on earth.

Shelley dedicated “The Cenci” to Leigh Hunt, saying that he had striven in this tragedy to cast aside the subjective manner of his earlier work, and to produce something at once more popular and more concrete, more sober in style, and with a firmer grasp on the realities of life. He was very desirous of getting it acted, and wrote to Peacock requesting him to offer it at Covent Garden. Miss O’Neil, he thought, would play the part of Beatrice admirably. The manager, however, did not take this view; averring that the subject rendered it incapable of being even submitted to an actress like Miss O’Neil. Shelley’s self-criticism is always so valuable, that it may be well here to collect what he said about the two great dramas of 1819. Concerning “The Cenci” he wrote to Peacock:—”It is written without any of the peculiar feelings and opinions which characterize my other compositions; I having attended simply to the impartial development of such characters as it is probable the persons represented really were, together with the greatest degree of popular effect to be produced by such a development.” “‘Cenci’ is written for the multitude, and ought to sell well.” “I believe it singularly fitted for the stage.” “‘The Cenci’ is a work of art; it is not coloured by my feelings, nor obscured by my metaphysics. I don’t think much of it. It gave me less trouble than anything I have written of the same length.” “Prometheus”, on the other hand, he tells Ollier, “is my favourite poem; I charge you, therefore, specially to pet him and feed him with fine ink and good paper” — which was duly done. Again:—”For ‘Prometheus’, I expect and desire no great sale; Prometheus was never intended for more than five or six persons; it is in my judgment of a higher character than anything I have yet attempted, and is perhaps less an imitation of anything that has gone before it; it is original, and cost me severe mental labour.” Shelley was right in judging that “The Cenci” would be comparatively popular; this was proved by the fact that it went through two editions in his lifetime. The value he set upon “Prometheus” as the higher work, will hardly be disputed. Unique in the history of literature, and displaying the specific qualities of its author at their height, the world could less easily afford to lose this drama than “The Cenci”, even though that be the greatest tragedy composed in English since the death of Shakespeare. For reasons which will be appreciated by lovers of dramatic poetry, I refrain from detaching portions of these two plays. Those who desire to make themselves acquainted with

the author's genius, must devote long and patient study to the originals in their entirety.

"Prometheus Unbound", like the majority of Shelley's works, fell still-born from the press. It furnished punsters with a joke, however, which went the round of several papers; this poem, they cried, is well named, for who would bind it? Of criticism that deserves the name, Shelley got absolutely nothing in his lifetime. The stupid but venomous reviews which gave him occasional pain, but which he mostly laughed at, need not now be mentioned. It is not much to any purpose to abuse the authors of mere rubbish. The real lesson to be learned from such of them as may possibly have been sincere, as well as from the failure of his contemporaries to appreciate his genius — the sneers of Moore, the stupidity of Campbell, the ignorance of Wordsworth, the priggishness of Southey, or the condescending tone of Keats — is that nothing is more difficult than for lesser men or equals to pay just homage to the greatest in their lifetime. Those who may be interested in studying Shelley's attitude toward his critics, should read a letter addressed to Ollier from Florence, October 15, 1819, soon after he had seen the vile attack upon him in the "Quarterly", comparing this with the fragments of an expostulatory letter to the Editor, and the preface to "Adonais". (Shelley Memorials, page 121. Garnett's Relics of Shelley, pages 49, 190. Collected Letters, page 147, in Moxon's Edition of Works in one volume 1840.) It is clear that, though he bore scurrilous abuse with patience, he was prepared if needful to give blow for blow. On the 11th of June, 1821, he wrote to Ollier:—"As yet I have laughed; but woe to those scoundrels if they should once make me lose my temper!" The stanzas on the "Quarterly" in "Adonais", and the invective against Lord Eldon, show what Shelley could have done if he had chosen to castigate the curs. Meanwhile the critics achieved what they intended. Shelley, as Trelawny emphatically tells us, was universally shunned, coldly treated by Byron's friends at Pisa, and regarded as a monster by such of the English in Italy as had not made his personal acquaintance. On one occasion he is even said to have been knocked down in a post-office by some big bully, who escaped before he could obtain his name and address; but this is one of the stories rendered doubtful by the lack of precise details.

CHAPTER 6. RESIDENCE AT PISA.

On the 26th of January, 1820, the Shelley's established themselves at Pisa. From this date forward to the 7th of July, 1822, Shelley's life divides itself into two periods of unequal length; the first spent at Pisa, the baths of San Giuliano, and Leghorn; the second at Lerici, on the Bay of Spezia. Without entering into minute particulars of dates or recording minor changes of residence, it is possible to treat of the first and longer period in general. The house he inhabited at Pisa was on the south side of the Arno. After a few months he became the neighbour of Lord Byron, who engaged the Palazzo Lanfranchi it order to be near him; and here many English and Italian friends gathered round them. Among these must be mentioned in the first place Captain Medwin, whose recollections of the Pisan residence are of considerable value, and next Captain Trelawny, who has left a record of Shelley's last days only equalled in vividness by Hogg's account of the Oxford period, and marked by signs of more unmistakable accuracy. Not less important members of this private circle were Mr. and Mrs. Edward Elleker Williams, with whom Shelley and his wife lived on terms of the closest friendship. Among Italians, the physician Vacca, the improvisatore Sgricci, and Rosini, the author of "La Monaca di Monza", have to be recorded. It will be seen from this enumeration that Shelley was no longer solitary; and indeed it would appear that now, upon the eve of his accidental death, he had begun to enjoy an immunity from many of his previous sufferings. Life expanded before him: his letters show that he was concentrating his powers and preparing for a fresh flight; and the months, though ever productive of poetic masterpieces, promised a still more magnificent birth in the future.

In the summer and autumn of 1820, Shelley produced some of his most genial poems: the "Letter to Maria Gisborne", which might be mentioned as a pendent to "Julian and Maddalo" for its treatment of familiar things; the "Ode to a Skylark", that most popular of all his lyrics; the "Witch of Atlas", unrivalled as an Ariel-flight of fairy fancy; and the "Ode to Naples", which, together with the "Ode to Liberty", added a new lyric form to English literature. In the winter he wrote the "Sensitive Plant", prompted thereto, we are told, by the flowers which crowded Mrs. Shelley's drawing room, and exhaled their sweetness to the temperate Italian sunlight. Whether we

consider the number of these poems or their diverse character, ranging from verse separated by an exquisitely subtle line from simple prose to the most impassioned eloquence and the most ethereal imagination, we shall be equally astonished. Every chord of the poet's lyre is touched, from the deep bass string that echoes the diurnal speech of such a man as Shelley was, to the fine vibrations of a treble merging its rarity of tone in accents super-sensible to ordinary ears. One passage from the "Letter to Maria Gisborne" may here be quoted, not for its poetry, but for the light it casts upon the circle of his English friends.

You are now
In London, that great sea, whose ebb and flow
At once is deaf and loud, and on the shore
Vomits its wrecks, and still howls on for more.
Yet in its depth what treasures! You will see
That which was Godwin, — greater none than he
Though fallen — and fallen on evil times — to stand
Among the spirits of our age and land,
Before the dread tribunal of "To come"
The foremost, while Rebuke cowers pale and dumb.
You will see Coleridge — he who sits obscure
In the exceeding lustre and the pure
Intense irradiation of a mind,
Which, with its own internal lightning blind,
Flags wearily through darkness and despair —
A cloud-encircled meteor of the air,
A hooded eagle among blinking owls.
You will see Hunt; one of those happy souls
Which are the salt of the earth, and without whom
This world would smell like what it is — a tomb;
Who is, what others seem. His room no doubt
Is still adorned by many a cast from Shout,
With graceful flowers tastefully placed about,
And coronals of bay from ribbons hung,
And brighter wreaths in neat disorder flung;
The gifts of the most learn'd among some dozens
Of female friends, sisters-in-law, and cousins.

And there is he with his eternal puns,
Which beat the dullest brain for smiles, like duns
Thundering for money at a poet's door;
Alas! it is no use to say, "I'm poor!" —
Or oft in graver mood, when he will look
Things wiser than were ever read in book,
Except in Shakespere's wisest tenderness.
You will see Hogg; and I cannot express
His virtues, though I know that they are great,
Because he locks, then barricades the gate
Within which they inhabit. Of his wit
And wisdom, you'll cry out when you are bit.
He is a pearl within an oyster-shell,
One of the richest of the deep. And there
Is English Peacock, with his mountain fair, —
Turn'd into a Flamingo, that shy bird
That gleams in the Indian air. Have you not heard
When a man marries, dies, or turns Hindoo,
His best friends hear no more of him. But you
Will see him, and will like him too, I hope,
With the milk-white Snowdownian antelope
Match'd with this camelopard. His fine wit
Makes such a wound, the knife is lost in it;
A strain too learned for a shallow age,
Too wise for selfish bigots; let his page
Which charms the chosen spirits of the time,
Fold itself up for the serener clime
Of years to come, and find its recompense
In that just expectation. Wit and sense,
Virtue and human knowledge, all that might
Make this dull world a business of delight,
Are all combined in Horace Smith. And these,
With some exceptions, which I need not tease
Your patience by descanting on, are all
You and I know in London.

Captain Medwin, who came late in the autumn of 1820, at his cousin's invitation, to stay with the Shelleys, has recorded many interesting details of their Pisan life, as well as valuable notes of Shelley's conversation. "It was nearly seven years since we had parted, but I should have immediately recognized him in a crowd. His figure was emaciated, and somewhat bent, owing to near-sightedness, and his being forced to lean over his books, with his eyes almost touching them; his hair, still profuse, and curling naturally, was partially interspersed with grey; but his appearance was youthful. There was also a freshness and purity in his complexion that he never lost." Not long after his arrival, Medwin suffered from a severe and tedious illness. "Shelley tended me like a brother. He applied my leeches, administered my medicines, and during six weeks that I was confined to my room, was assiduous and unintermitting in his affectionate care of me." The poet's solitude and melancholy at this time impressed his cousin very painfully. Though he was producing a long series of imperishable poems, he did not take much interest in his work. "I am disgusted with writing," he once said, "and were it not for an irresistible impulse, that predominates my better reason, should discontinue so doing." The brutal treatment he had lately received from the "Quarterly Review", the calumnies which pursued him, and the coldness of all but a very few friends, checked his enthusiasm for composition. Of this there is abundant proof in his correspondence. In a letter to Leigh Hunt, dated January 25, 1822, he says: "My faculties are shaken to atoms and torpid. I can write nothing; and if "Adonais" had no success, and excited no interest, what incentive can I have to write?" Again: "I write little now. It is impossible to compose except under the strong excitement of an assurance of finding sympathy in what you write." Lord Byron's company proved now, as before, a check rather than an incentive to production: "I do not write; I have lived too long near Lord Byron, and the sun has extinguished the glow-worm; for I cannot hope, with St. John, that THE LIGHT CAME INTO THE WORLD AND THE WORLD KNEW IT NOT." "I despair of rivalling Lord Byron, as well I may, and there is no other with whom it is worth contending." To Ollier, in 1820, he wrote: "I doubt whether I shall write more. I could be content either with the hell or the paradise of poetry; but the torments of its purgatory vex me, without exciting my powers sufficiently to put an end to the vexation." It was not that his spirit was cowed by the Reviews, or that he mistook the sort of audience he had to address. He more than once acknowledged that, while

Byron wrote for the many, his poems were intended for the understanding few. Yet the sunetoi, as he called them, gave him but scanty encouragement. The cold phrases of kindly Horace Smith show that he had not comprehended "Prometheus Unbound"; and Shelley whimsically complains that even intelligent and sympathetic critics confounded the ideal passion described in "Epipsychidion" with the love affairs of "a servant-girl and her sweetheart." This almost incomprehensible obtuseness on the part of men who ought to have known better, combined with the coarse abuse of vulgar scribblers, was enough to make a man so sincerely modest as Shelley doubt his powers, or shrink from the severe labour of developing them. (See Medwin, volume 2 page 172, for Shelley's comment on the difficulty of the poet's art.) "The decision of the cause," he wrote to Mr. Gisborne, "whether or no *I* am a poet, is removed from the present time to the hour when our posterity shall assemble; but the court is a very severe one, and I fear that the verdict will be, guilty — death." Deep down in his own heart he had, however, less doubt: "This I know," he said to Medwin, "that whether in prosing or in versing, there is something in my writings that shall live for ever." And again, he writes to Hunt: "I am full of thoughts and plans, and should do something, if the feeble and irritable frame which encloses it was willing to obey the spirit. I fancy that then I should do great things." It seems almost certain that the incompleteness of many longer works designed in the Italian period, the abandonment of the tragedy on Tasso's story, the unfinished state of "Charles I", and the failure to execute the cherished plan of a drama suggested by the Book of Job, were due to the depressing effects of ill-health and external discouragement. Poetry with Shelley was no light matter. He composed under the pressure of intense excitement, and he elaborated his first draughts with minute care and severe self-criticism.

These words must not be taken as implying that he followed the Virgilian precedent of polishing and reducing the volume of his verses by an anxious exercise of calm reflection, or that he observed the Horatian maxim of deferring their publication till the ninth year. The contrary was notoriously the case with him. Yet it is none the less proved by the state of his manuscripts that his compositions, even as we now possess them, were no mere improvisations. The passage already quoted from his "Defence of Poetry" shows the high ideal he had conceived of the poet's duty toward his art; and it may be confidently asserted that his whole literary career was one

long struggle to emerge from the incoherence of his earlier efforts, into the clearness of expression and precision of form that are the index of mastery over style. At the same time it was inconsistent with his most firmly rooted aesthetic principles to attempt composition except under an impulse approaching to inspiration. To imperil his life by the fiery taxing of all his faculties, moral, intellectual, and physical, and to undergo the discipline exacted by his own fastidious taste, with no other object in view than the frigid compliments of a few friends, was more than even Shelley's enthusiasm could endure. He, therefore, at this period required the powerful stimulus of some highly exciting cause from without to determine his activity.

Such external stimulus came to Shelley from three quarters early in the year 1821. Among his Italian acquaintances at Pisa was a clever but disreputable Professor, of whom Medwin draws a very piquant portrait. This man one day related the sad story of a beautiful and noble lady, the Contessina Emilia Viviani, who had been confined by her father in a dismal convent of the suburbs, to await her marriage with a distasteful husband. Shelley, fired as ever by a tale of tyranny, was eager to visit the fair captive. The Professor accompanied him and Medwin to the convent-parlour, where they found her more lovely than even the most glowing descriptions had led them to expect. Nor was she only beautiful. Shelley soon discovered that she had "cultivated her mind beyond what I have ever met in Italian women;" and a rhapsody composed by her upon the subject of Uranian Love — Il Vero Amore — justifies the belief that she possessed an intellect of more than ordinary elevation. He took Mrs. Shelley to see her, and both did all they could to make her convent-prison less irksome, by frequent visits, by letters, and by presents of flowers and books. It was not long before Shelley's sympathy for this unfortunate lady took the form of love, which, however spiritual and Platonic, was not the less passionate. The result was the composition of "Epipsychidion," the most unintelligible of all his poems to those who have not assimilated the spirit of Plato's "Symposium" and Dante's "Vita Nuova". In it he apostrophizes Emilia Viviani as the incarnation of ideal beauty, the universal loveliness made visible in mortal flesh: —

Seraph of Heaven! too gentle to be human,
Veiling beneath that radiant form of woman

All that is insupportable in thee
Of light, and love, and immortality!

He tells her that he loves her, and describes the troubles and deceptions of his earlier manhood, under allegories veiled in delicate obscurity. The Pandemic and the Uranian Aphrodite have striven for his soul; for though in youth he dedicated himself to the service of ideal beauty, and seemed to find it under many earthly shapes, yet has he ever been deluded. At last Emily appears, and in her he recognizes the truth of the vision veiled from him so many years. She and Mary shall henceforth, like sun and moon, rule the world of love within him. Then he calls on her to fly. They three will escape and live together, far away from men, in an Aegean island. The description of this visionary isle, and of the life to be led there by the fugitives from a dull and undiscerning world, is the most beautiful that has been written this century in the rhymed heroic metre.

It is an isle under Ionian skies,
Beautiful as a wreck of Paradise;
And, for the harbours are not safe and good,
This land would have remained a solitude
But for some pastoral people native there,
Who from the Elysian, clear, and golden air
Draw the last spirit of the age of gold,
Simple and spirited, innocent and bold.
The blue Aegean girds this chosen home,
With ever-changing sound and light and foam
Kissing the sifted sands and caverns hoar;
And all the winds wandering along the shore,
Undulate with the undulating tide.
There are thick woods where sylvan forms abide;
And many a fountain, rivulet, and pond,
As clear as elemental diamond,
Or serene morning air. And far beyond,
The mossy tracks made by the goats and deer,
(Which the rough shepherd treads but once a year,)
Pierce into glades, caverns, and bowers, and halls
Built round with ivy, which the waterfalls

Illumining, with sound that never fails
Accompany the noonday nightingales;
And all the place is peopled with sweet airs.
The light clear element which the isle wears
Is heavy with the scent of lemon-flowers,
Which floats like mist laden with unseen showers,
And falls upon the eyelids like faint sleep;
And from the moss violets and jonquils peep,
And dart the arrowy odour through the brain,
Till you might faint with that delicious pain.
And every motion, odour, beam, and tone,
With that deep music is in unison:
Which is a soul within a soul — they seem
Like echoes of an antenatal dream.
It is an isle ‘twixt heaven, air, earth, and sea,
Cradled, and hung in clear tranquillity;
Bright as that wandering Eden, Lucifer,
Washed by the soft blue oceans of young air.
It is a favoured place. Famine or Blight,
Pestilence, War, and Earthquake, never light
Upon its mountain-peaks; blind vultures, they
Sail onward far upon their fatal way.
The winged storms, chanting their thunder-psalm
To other lands, leave azure chasms of calm
Over this isle, or weep themselves in dew,
From which its fields and woods ever renew
Their green and golden immortality.
And from the sea there rise, and from the sky
There fall, clear exhalations, soft and bright,
Veil after veil, each hiding some delight,
Which sun or moon or zephyr draws aside,
Till the isle’s beauty, like a naked bride
Glowing at once with love and loveliness,
Blushes and trembles at its own excess:
Yet, like a buried lamp, a soul no less
Burns in the heart of this delicious isle,
An atom of the Eternal, whose own smile

Unfolds itself, and may be felt not seen
O'er the grey rocks, blue waves, and forests green,
Filling their bare and void interstices.

Shelley did not publish "Epipsychidion" with his own name. He gave it to the world as a composition of a man who had "died at Florence, as he was preparing for a voyage to one of the Sporades," and he requested Ollier not to circulate it, except among a few intelligent readers. It may almost be said to have been never published, in such profound silence did it issue from the press. Very shortly after its appearance he described it to Leigh Hunt as "a portion of me already dead," and added this significant allusion to its subject matter:—"Some of us have in a prior existence been in love with Antigone, and that makes us find no full content in any mortal tie." In the letter of June 18, 1822, again he says:—"The 'Epipsychidion' I cannot look at; the person whom it celebrates was a cloud instead of a Juno; and poor Ixion starts from the Centaur that was the offspring of his own embrace. If you are curious, however, to hear what I am and have been, it will tell you something thereof. It is an idealized history of my life and feelings. I think one is always in love with something or other; the error, and I confess it is not easy for spirits cased in flesh and blood to avoid it, consists in seeking in a mortal image the likeness of what is, perhaps, eternal." This paragraph contains the essence of a just criticism. Brilliant as the poem is, we cannot read it with unwavering belief either in the author's sincerity at the time he wrote it, or in the permanence of the emotion it describes. The exordium has a fatal note of rhetorical exaggeration, not because the kind of passion is impossible, but because Shelley does not convince us that in this instance he had really been its subject. His own critique, following so close upon the publication of "Epipsychidion," confirms the impression made by it, and justifies the conclusion that he had utilized his feeling for Emilia to express a favourite doctrine in impassioned verse.

To students of Shelley's inner life "Epipsychidion" will always have high value, independently of its beauty of style, as containing his doctrine of love. It is the full expression of the esoteric principle presented to us in "Alastor", the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," and "Prince Athanase." But the words just quoted, which may be compared with Mrs. Shelley's note to "Prince Athanase," authorize our pointing out what he himself recognized

as the defect of his theory. Instead of remaining true to the conception of Beauty expressed in the "Hymn," Shelley "sought through the world the One whom he may love." Thus, while his doctrine in "Epipsychidion" seems Platonic, it will not square with the "Symposium." Plato treats the love of a beautiful person as a mere initiation into divine mysteries, the first step in the ladder that ascends to heaven. When a man has formed a just conception of the universal beauty, he looks back with a smile upon those who find their soul's sphere in the love of some mere mortal object. Tested by this standard, Shelley's identification of Intellectual Beauty with so many daughters of earth, and his worshipping love of Emilia, is a spurious Platonism. Plato would have said that to seek the Idea of Beauty in Emilia Viviani was a retrogressive step. All that she could do, would be to quicken the soul's sense of beauty, to stir it from its lethargy, and to make it divine the eternal reality of beauty in the supersensual world of thought. This Shelley had already acknowledged in the "Hymn;" and this he emphasizes in these words:—"The error consists in seeking in a mortal image the likeness of what is, perhaps, eternal."

The fragments and cancelled passages published in Forman's edition do not throw much light upon "Epipsychidion." The longest, entitled "To his Genius" by its first editor, Mr. Garnett, reads like the induction to a poem conceived and written in a different key, and at a lower level of inspiration. It has, however, this extraordinary interest, that it deals with a love which is both love and friendship, above sex, spiritual, unintelligible to the world at large. Thus the fragment enables the student better to realize the kind of worship so passionately expressed in "Epipsychidion."

The news of Keats's death at Rome on the 27th of December, 1820, and the erroneous belief that it had been accelerated, if not caused, by a contemptible review of "Endymion" in the "Quarterly", stirred Shelley to the composition of "Adonais". He had it printed at Pisa, and sent copies to Ollier for circulation in London. This poem was a favourite with its author, who hoped not only that it might find acceptance with the public, but also that it would confer lustre upon the memory of a poet whom he sincerely admired. No criticisms upon Shelley's works are half so good as his own. It is, therefore, interesting to collect the passages in which he speaks of an elegy only equalled in our language by "Lycidas", and in the point of passionate eloquence even superior to Milton's youthful lament for his friend. "The 'Adonais', in spite of its mysticism," he writes to Ollier, "is the

least imperfect of my compositions." "I confess I should be surprised if that poem were born to an immortality of oblivion." "It is a highly wrought PIECE OF ART, and perhaps better, in point of composition, than anything I have written." "It is absurd in any review to criticize 'Adonais', and still more to pretend that the verses are bad." "I know what to think of 'Adonais', but what to think of those who confound it with the many bad poems of the day, I know not." Again, alluding to the stanzas hurled against the infamous "Quarterly" reviewer, he says:—"I have dipped my pen in consuming fire for his destroyers; otherwise the style is calm and solemn."

With these estimates the reader of to-day will cordially agree. Although "Adonais" is not so utterly beyond the scope of other poets as "Prometheus" or "Epipsychidion," it presents Shelley's qualities in a form of even and sustained beauty, brought within the sphere of the dullest apprehensions. Shelley, we may notice, dwells upon the ART of the poem; and this perhaps, is what at first sight will strike the student most. He chose as a foundation for his work those laments of Bion for Adonis, and of Moschus for Bion, which are the most pathetic products of Greek idyllic poetry; and the transmutation of their material into the substance of highly spiritualized modern thought, reveals the potency of a Prospero's wand. It is a metamorphosis whereby the art of excellent but positive poets has been translated into the sphere of metaphysical imagination. Urania takes the place of Aphrodite; the thoughts and fancies and desires of the dead singer are substituted for Bion's cupids; and instead of mountain shepherds, the living bards of England are summoned to lament around the poet's bier. Yet it is only when Shelley frees himself from the influence of his models, that he soars aloft on mighty wing. This point, too, is the point of transition from death, sorrow, and the past to immortality, joy, and the rapture of the things that cannot pass away. The first and second portions of the poem are, at the same time, thoroughly concordant, and the passage from the one to the other is natural. Two quotations from "Adonais" will suffice to show the power and sweetness of its verse.

The first is a description of Shelley himself following Byron and Moore — the "Pilgrim of Eternity," and Ierne's "sweetest lyrist of her saddest wrong" — to the couch where Keats lies dead. There is both pathos and unconscious irony in his making these two poets the chief mourners, when we remember what Byron wrote about Keats in "Don Juan", and what Moore afterwards recorded of Shelley; and when we think, moreover, how

far both Keats and Shelley have outsoared Moore, and disputed with Byron his supreme place in the heaven of poetry.

Midst others of less note, came one frail Form,
A phantom among men, companionless
As the last cloud of an expiring storm,
Whose thunder is its knell. He, as I guess,
Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness,
Actaeon-like, and now he fled astray
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,
And his own thoughts, along that rugged way,
Pursued like raging hounds their father and their prey.

A pard-like Spirit beautiful and swift —
A love in desolation masked — a Power
Girt round with weakness; it can scarce uplift
The weight of the superincumbent hour;
Is it a dying lamp, a falling shower,
A breaking billow; — even whilst we speak
Is it not broken? On the withering flower
The killing sun smiles brightly: on a cheek
The life can burn in blood, even while the heart may break.

His head was bound with pansies over-blown,
And faded violets, white and pied and blue;
And a light spear topped with a cypress cone,
Round whose rude shaft dark ivy-tresses grew
Yet dripping with the forest's noon-day dew,
Vibrated, as the ever-beating heart
Shook the weak hand that grasped it. Of that crew
He came the last, neglected and apart;
A herd-abandoned deer, struck by the hunter's dart.

The second passage is the peroration of the poem. Nowhere has Shelley expressed his philosophy of man's relation to the universe with more sublimity and with a more imperial command of language than in these stanzas. If it were possible to identify that philosophy with any recognized system of thought, it might be called pantheism. But it is difficult to affix a

name, stereotyped by the usage of the schools, to the aerial spiritualism of its ardent and impassioned poet's creed.

The movement of the long melodious sorrow-song has just been interrupted by three stanzas, in which Shelley lashes the reviewer of Keats. He now bursts forth afresh into the music of consolation: —

Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep!
He hath awakened from the dream of life.
'Tis we who, lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
And in mad trance strike with our spirit's knife
Invulnerable nothings. WE decay
Like corpses in a charnel; fear and grief
Convulse us and consume us day by day,
And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living clay.

He has outsoared the shadow of our night;
Envy and calumny, and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown grey in vain;
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

He lives, he wakes—'tis Death is dead, not he;
Mourn not for Adonais. — Thou young Dawn,
Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee
The spirit thou lamentest is not gone;
Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan!
Cease, ye faint flowers and fountains, and thou Air
Which like a mourning veil thy scarf hadst thrown
O'er the abandoned Earth, now leave it bare
Even to the joyous stars which smile on its despair!

He is made one with Nature: there is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan

Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird;
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own;
Which wields the world with never wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely: he doth bear
His part, while the One Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there
All new successions to the forms they wear;
Torturing th' unwilling dross that checks its flight
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear;
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light.

But the absorption of the human soul into primeval nature-forces, the blending of the principle of thought with the universal spirit of beauty, is not enough to satisfy man's yearning after immortality. Therefore in the next three stanzas the indestructibility of the personal self is presented to us, as the soul of Adonais passes into the company of the illustrious dead who, like him, were untimely slain: —

The splendours of the firmament of time
May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not:
Like stars to their appointed height they climb,
And death is a low mist which cannot blot
The brightness it may veil. When lofty thought
Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
And love and life contend in it, for what
Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there,
And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air.

The inheritors of unfulfilled renown
Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought,
Far in the Unapparent. Chatterton

Rose pale, his solemn agony had not
Yet faded from him; Sidney, as he fought
And as he fell, and as he lived and loved,
Sublimely mild, a Spirit without spot,
Arose; and Lucan, by his death approved: —
Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing reproved.

And many more, whose names on Earth are dark,
But whose transmitted effluence cannot die
So long as fire outlives the parent spark,
Rose, robed in dazzling immortality.
"Thou art become as one of us," they cry;
"It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long
Swung blind in unascended majesty,
Silent alone amid an Heaven of song.
Assume thy winged throne, thou Vesper of our throng!"

From the more universal and philosophical aspects of his theme, the poet once more turns to the special subject that had stirred him. Adonais lies dead; and those who mourn him must seek his grave. He has escaped: to follow him is to die; and where should we learn to dote on death unterrified, if not in Rome? In this way the description of Keat's resting-place beneath the pyramid of Cestius, which was also destined to be Shelley's own, is introduced: —

Who mourns for Adonais? oh come forth,
Fond wretch! and show thyself and him aright.
Clasp with thy panting soul the pendulous Earth;
As from a centre, dart thy spirit's light
Beyond all worlds, until its spacious might
Satiate the void circumference: then shrink
Even to a point within our day and night;
And keep thy heart light, let it make thee sink
When hope has kindled hope, and lured thee to the brink.

Or go to Rome, which is the sepulchre,
Oh, not of him, but of our joy: 'tis nought
That ages, empires, and religions there

Lie buried in the ravage they have wrought;
For such as he can lend, — they borrow not
Glory from those who made the world their prey;
And he is gathered to the kings of thought
Who waged contention with their time's decay,
And of the past are all that cannot pass away.

Go thou to Rome, — at once the Paradise,
The grave, the city, and the wilderness;
And where its wrecks like shattered mountains rise,
And flowering weeds and fragrant corpses dress
The bones of Desolation's nakedness,
Pass, till the Spirit of the spot shall lead
Thy footsteps to a slope of green access,
Where, like an infant's smile, over the dead
A light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread;

And grey walls moulder round, on which dull Time
Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand;
And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,
Pavilioning the dust of him who planned
This refuge for his memory, doth stand
Like flame transformed to marble; and beneath,
A field is spread, on which a newer band
Have pitched in Heaven's smile their camp of death,
Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguished breath.

Here pause: these graves are all too young as yet
To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned
Its charge to each; and if the seal is set,
Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind,
Break if not thou! too surely shalt thou find
Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind
Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
What Adonais is, why fear we to become?

Yet again the thought of Death as the deliverer, the revealer, and the mystagogue, through whom the soul of man is reunited to the spirit of the universe, returns; and on this solemn note the poem closes. The symphony of exultation which had greeted the passage of Adonais into the eternal world, is here subdued to a graver key, as befits the mood of one whom mystery and mourning still oppress on earth. Yet even in the somewhat less than jubilant conclusion we feel that highest of all Shelley's qualities — the liberation of incalculable energies, the emancipation and expansion of a force within the soul, victorious over circumstance, exhilarated and elevated by contact with such hopes as make a feebler spirit tremble:

The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments. — Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
Follow where all is fled! — Rome's azure sky,
Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart?
Thy hopes are gone before: from all things here
They have departed; thou shouldst now depart!
A light is past from the revolving year,
And man and woman; and what still is dear
Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.
The soft sky smiles, the low wind whispers near:
'Tis Adonais calls! oh, hasten thither!
No more let Life divide what Death can join together.

That light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That beauty in which all things work and move,
That benediction which the eclipsing curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,

Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst, now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

The breath whose might I have invoked in song
Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given.
The massy earth and sphered skies are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully afar;
Whilst burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

It will be seen that, whatever Shelley may from time to time have said about the immortality of the soul, he was no materialist, and no believer in the extinction of the spiritual element by death. Yet he was too wise to dogmatize upon a problem which by its very nature admits of no solution in this world. "I hope," he said, "but my hopes are not unmixed with fear for what will befall this inestimable spirit when we appear to die." On another occasion he told Trelawny, "I am content to see no farther into futurity than Plato and Bacon. My mind is tranquil; I have no fears and some hopes. In our present gross material state our faculties are clouded; when Death removes our clay coverings, the mystery will be solved." How constantly the thought of death as the revealer was present to his mind, may be gathered from an incident related by Trelawny. They were bathing in the Arno, when Shelley, who could not swim, plunged into deep water, and "lay stretched out at the bottom like a conger eel, not making the least effort or struggle to save himself." Trelawny fished him out, and when he had taken breath he said: "I always find the bottom of the well, and they say Truth lies there. In another minute I should have found it, and you would have found an empty shell. Death is the veil which those who live call life; they sleep, and it is lifted." Yet being pressed by his friend, he refused to acknowledge a formal and precise belief in the imperishability of the human soul. "We know nothing; we have no evidence; we cannot express our inmost thoughts. They are incomprehensible even to ourselves." The clear insight into the conditions of the question conveyed by the last sentence is very

characteristic of Shelley. It makes us regret the non-completion of his essay on a "Future Life", which would certainly have stated the problem with rare lucidity and candour, and would have illuminated the abyss of doubt with a sense of spiritual realities not often found in combination with wise suspension of judgment. What he clung to amid all perplexities was the absolute and indestructible existence of the universal as perceived by us in love, beauty, and delight. Though the destiny of the personal self be obscure, these things cannot fail. The conclusion of the "Sensitive Plant" might be cited as conveying the quintessence of his hope upon this most intangible of riddles.

Whether the Sensitive Plant, or that
Which within its boughs like a spirit sat,
Ere its outward form had known decay,
Now felt this change, I cannot say.

I dare not guess; but in this life
Of error, ignorance, and strife,
Where nothing is, but all things seem,
And we the shadows of the dream:

It is a modest creed, and yet
Pleasant, if one considers it,
To own that death itself must be,
Like all the rest, a mockery.

That garden sweet, that lady fair,
And all sweet shapes and odours there,
In truth have never passed away:
'Tis we, 'tis ours, are changed; not they.

For love, and beauty, and delight,
There is no death nor change; their might
Exceeds our organs, which endure
No light, being themselves obscure.

But it is now time to return from this digression to the poem which suggested it, and which, more than any other, serves to illustrate its author's

mood of feeling about the life beyond the grave. The last lines of "Adonais" might be read as a prophecy of his own death by drowning. The frequent recurrence of this thought in his poetry is, to say the least, singular. In "Alastor" we read: —

A restless impulse urged him to embark
And meet lone Death on the drear ocean's waste;
For well he knew that mighty Shadow loves
The slimy caverns of the populous deep.

The "Ode to Liberty" closes on the same note: —

As a far taper fades with fading night;
As a brief insect dies with dying day,
My song, its pinions disarrayed of might,
Drooped. O'er it closed the echoes far away
Of the great voice which did its flight sustain,
As waves which lately paved his watery way
Hiss round a drowner's head in their tempestuous play.

The "Stanzas written in Dejection, near Naples", echo the thought with a slight variation: —

Yet now despair itself is mild,
Even as the winds and waters are;
I could lie down like a tired child,
And weep away the life of care
Which I have borne, and yet must bear, —
Till death like sleep might steal on me,
And I might feel in the warm air
My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea
Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony.

Trelawny tells a story of his friend's life at Lerici, which further illustrates his preoccupation with the thought of death at sea. He took Mrs. Williams and her children out upon the bay in his little boat one afternoon, and starting suddenly from a deep reverie, into which he had fallen, exclaimed with a joyful and resolute voice, "Now let us together solve the

great mystery!" Too much value must not be attached to what might have been a mere caprice of utterance. Yet the proposal not unreasonably frightened Mrs. Williams, for Shelley's friends were accustomed to expect the realisation of his wildest fancies. It may incidentally be mentioned that before the water finally claimed its victim, he had often been in peril of life upon his fatal element — during the first voyage to Ireland, while crossing the Channel with Mary in an open boat, again at Meillerie with Byron, and once at least with Williams.

A third composition of the year 1821 was inspired by the visit of Prince Mavrocordato to Pisa. He called on Shelley in April, showed him a copy of Prince Ipsilanti's proclamation, and announced that Greece was determined to strike a blow for freedom. The news aroused all Shelley's enthusiasm, and he began the lyrical drama of "Hellas", which he has described as "a sort of imitation of the 'Persae' of Aeschylus." We find him at work upon it in October; and it must have been finished by the end of that month, since the dedication bears the date of November 1st, 1821. Shelley did not set great store by it. "It was written," he says, "without much care, and in one of those few moments of enthusiasm which now seldom visit me, and which make me pay dear for their visits." The preface might, if space permitted, be cited as a specimen of his sound and weighty judgment upon one of the greatest political questions of this century. What he says about the debt of the modern world to ancient Hellas, is no less pregnant than his severe strictures upon the part played by Russia in dealing with Eastern questions. For the rest, the poem is distinguished by passages of great lyrical beauty, rising at times to the sublimest raptures, and closing on the half-pathetic cadence of that well-known Chorus, "The world's great age begins anew." Of dramatic interest it has but little; nor is the play, as finished, equal to the promise held forth by the superb fragment of its so-called Prologue. (Forman, 4 page 95.) This truly magnificent torso must, I think, have been the commencement of the drama as conceived upon a different and more colossal plan, which Shelley rejected for some unknown reason. It shows the influence not only of the Book of Job, but also of the Prologue in Heaven to Faust, upon his mind.

The lyric movement of the Chorus from "Hellas", which I propose to quote, marks the highest point of Shelley's rhythmical invention. As for the matter expressed in it, we must not forget that these stanzas are written for a Chorus of Greek captive women, whose creed does not prevent their feeling

a regret for the “mightier forms of an older, austerer worship.” Shelley’s note reminds the reader, with characteristic caution and frankness, that “the popular notions of Christianity are represented in this Chorus as true in their relation to the worship they superseded, and that which in all probability they will supersede, without considering their merits in a relation more universal.”

Worlds on worlds are rolling over
From creation to decay,
Like the bubbles on a river
Sparkling, bursting, borne away.
But they are still immortal
Who, through birth’s orient portal,
And death’s dark chasm hurrying to and fro,
Clothe their unceasing flight
In the brief dust and light
Gathered around their chariots as they go;
New shapes they still may weave,
New gods, new laws receive;
Bright or dim are they, as the robes they last
On Death’s bare ribs had cast.

A power from the unknown God,
A Promethan conqueror came;
Like a triumphal path he trod
The thorns of death and shame.
A mortal shape to him
Was like the vapour dim
Which the orient planet animates with light.
Hell, Sin, and Slavery came,
Like bloodhounds mild and tame,
Nor preyed until their Lord had taken flight.
The moon of Mahomet
Arose, and it shall set:
While blazoned as on heaven’s immortal noon
The cross leads generations on.

Swift as the radiant shapes of sleep
From one whose dreams are paradise,
Fly, when the fond wretch wakes to weep,
And day peers forth with her blank eyes;
So fleet, so faint, so fair,
The Powers of earth and air
Fled from the folding star of Bethlehem:
Apollo, Pan, and Love
And even Olympian Jove,
Grew weak, for killing Truth had glared on them.
Our hills, and seas, and streams,
Dispeopled of their dreams,
Their waters turned to blood, their dew to tears,
Wailed for the golden years.

In the autumn of this year Shelley paid Lord Byron a visit at Ravenna, where he made acquaintance with the Countess Guiccoli. It was then settled that Byron, who had formed the project of starting a journal to be called "The Liberal" in concert with Leigh Hunt, should himself settle in Pisa. Leigh Hunt was to join his brother poets in the same place. The prospect gave Shelley great pleasure, for he was sincerely attached to Hunt; and though he would not promise contributions to the journal, partly lest his name should bring discredit on it, and partly because he did not choose to appear before the world as a hanger-on of Byron's, he thoroughly approved of a plan which would be profitable to his friend by bringing him into close relation with the most famous poet of the age. (See the Letter to Leigh Hunt, Pisa, August 26, 1821.) That he was not without doubts as to Byron's working easily in harness with Leigh Hunt, may be seen in his correspondence; and how fully these doubts were destined to be confirmed, is only too well known.

At Ravenna he was tormented by the report of some more than usually infamous calumny. What it was, we do not know; but that it made profound impression on his mind, appears from a remarkable letter addressed to his wife on the 16th and 17th of August from Ravenna. In it he repeats his growing weariness, and his wish to escape from society to solitude; the weariness of a nature wounded and disappointed by commerce with the world, but neither soured nor driven to fury by cruel wrongs. It is noticeable

at the same time that he clings to his present place of residence:—"our roots never struck so deeply as at Pisa, and the transplanted tree flourishes not." At Pisa he had found real rest and refreshment in the society of his two friends, the Williamses. Some of his saddest and most touching lyrics of this year are addressed to Jane — for so Mrs. Williams was called; and attentive students may perceive that the thought of Emilia was already blending by subtle transitions with the new thought of Jane. One poem, almost terrible in its intensity of melancholy, is hardly explicable on the supposition that Shelley was quite happy in his home. ("The Serpent is shut out from Paradise.") These words must be taken as implying no reflection either upon Mary's love for him, or upon his own power to bear the slighter troubles of domestic life. He was not a spoiled child of fortune, a weak egotist, or a querulous complainer. But he was always seeking and never finding the satisfaction of some deeper craving. In his own words, he had loved Antigone before he visited this earth: and no one woman could probably have made him happy, because he was for ever demanding more from love than it can give in the mixed circumstances of mortal life. Moreover, it must be remembered that his power of self-expression has bestowed permanent form on feelings which may have been but transitory; nor can we avoid the conclusion that, sincere as Shelley was, he, like all poets, made use of the emotion of the moment for purposes of art, converting an ephemeral mood into something typical and universal. This was almost certainly the case with "Epipsychidion."

So much at any rate had to be said upon this subject; for careful readers of Shelley's minor poems are forced to the conviction that during the last year of his life he often found relief from a wretchedness, which, however real, can hardly be defined, in the sympathy of this true-hearted woman. The affection he felt for Jane was beyond question pure and honourable. All the verses he addressed to her passed through her husband's hands without the slightest interruption to their intercourse; and Mrs. Shelley, who was not unpardonably jealous of her Ariel, continued to be Mrs. Williams's warm friend. A passage from Shelley's letter of June 18, 1822, expresses the plain prose of his relation to the Williamses:—"They are people who are very pleasing to me. But words are not the instruments of our intercourse. I like Jane more and more, and I find Williams the most amiable of companions. She has a taste for music, and an eloquence of form and motions that compensate in some degree for the lack of literary refinement."

Two lyrics of this period may here be introduced, partly for the sake of their intrinsic beauty, and partly because they illustrate the fecundity of Shelley's genius during the months of tranquil industry which he passed at Pisa. The first is an Invocation to Night: —

Swiftly walk over the western wave,
Spirit of Night!
Out of the misty eastern cave,
Where all the long and lone daylight,
Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear,
Which make thee terrible and dear, —
Swift be thy flight!

Wrap thy form in a mantle grey
Star-inwrought!
Blind with thine hair the eyes of day,
Kiss her until she be wearied out.
Then wander o'er city, and sea, and land,
Touching all with thin opiate wand —
Come, long-sought!

When I arose and saw the dawn,
I sighed for thee;
When light rode high, and the dew was gone,
And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,
And the weary Day turned to his rest,
Lingering like an unloved guest,
I sighed for thee.

Thy brother Death came, and cried,
"Wouldst thou me?"
Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,
Murmured like a noon-tide bee,
"Shall I nestle near thy side?
Wouldst thou me?" — and I replied,
"No, not thee!"

Death will come when thou art dead,
Soon, too soon —
Sleep will come when thou art fled;
Of neither would I ask the boon
I ask of thee, beloved Night —
Swift be thine approaching flight,
Come soon, soon!

The second is an Epithalamium composed for a drama which his friend Williams was writing. Students of the poetic art will find it not uninteresting to compare the three versions of this Bridal Song, given by Mr. Forman. (Volume 4 page 89.) They prove that Shelley was no careless writer.

The golden gates of sleep unbar
Where strength and beauty, met together,
Kindle their image like a star
In a sea of glassy weather!

Night, with all thy stars look down —
Darkness, weep thy holiest dew!
Never smiled the inconstant moon
On a pair so true.
Let eyes not see their own delight;
Haste, swift Hour, and thy flight
Oft renew.

Fairies, sprites, and angels, keep her!
Holy stars, permit no wrong!
And return to wake the sleeper,
Dawn, ere it be long.
O joy! O fear! what will be done
In the absence of the sun!
Come along!

Lyrics like these, delicate in thought and exquisitely finished in form, were produced with a truly wonderful profusion in this season of his happiest fertility. A glance at the last section of Mr. Palgrave's "Golden

Treasury" shows how large a place they occupy among the permanent jewels of our literature.

The month of January added a new and most important member to the little Pisan circle. This was Captain Edward John Trelawny, to whom more than to any one else but Hogg and Mrs. Shelley, the students of the poet's life are indebted for details at once accurate and characteristic. Trelawny had lived a free life in all quarters of the globe, far away from literary cliques and the society of cities, in contact with the sternest realities of existence, which had developed his self-reliance and his physical qualities to the utmost. The impression, therefore, made on him by Shelley has to be gravely estimated by all who still incline to treat the poet as a pathological specimen of humanity. This true child of nature recognized in his new friend far more than in Byron the stuff of a real man. "To form a just idea of his poetry, you should have witnessed his daily life; his words and actions best illustrated his writings." "The cynic Byron acknowledged him to be the best and ablest man he had ever known. The truth was, Shelley loved everything better than himself." "I have seen Shelley and Byron in society, and the contrast was as marked as their characters. The former, not thinking of himself, was as much at ease in his own home, omitting no occasion of obliging those whom he came in contact with, readily conversing with all or any who addressed him, irrespective of age or rank, dress or address." "All who heard him felt the charm of his simple, earnest manner: while Byron knew him to be exempt from the egotism, pedantry, coxcombry, and more than all the rivalry of authorship." "Shelley's mental activity was infectious; he kept your brain in constant action." "He was always in earnest." "He never laid aside his book and magic mantle; he waved his wand, and Byron, after a faint show of defiance, stood mute.... Shelley's earnestness and just criticism held him captive." These sentences, and many others, prove that Trelawny, himself somewhat of a cynic, cruelly exposing false pretensions, and detesting affectation in any for, paid unreserved homage to the heroic qualities this "dreamy bard,"—"uncommonly awkward," as he also called him — bad rider and poor seaman as he was—"over-sensitive," and "eternally brooding on his own thoughts," who "had seen no more of the waking-day than a girl at a boarding-school." True to himself, gentle, tender, with the courage of a lion, "frank and outspoken, like a well-conditioned boy, well-bred and considerate for others, because he was totally devoid of selfishness and vanity," Shelley seemed to this

unprejudiced companion of his last few months that very rare product for which Diogenes searched in vain — a man.

Their first meeting must be told in Trelawny's own words — words no less certain of immortality than the fame of him they celebrate. "The Williamses received me in their earnest, cordial manner; we had a great deal to communicate to each other, and were in loud and animated conversation, when I was rather put out by observing in the passage near the open door, opposite to where I sat, a pair of glittering eyes steadily fixed on mine; it was too dark to make out whom they belonged to. With the acuteness of a woman, Mrs. Williams's eyes followed the direction of mine, and going to the doorway she laughingly said, 'Come in, Shelley, its only our friend Tre just arrived.' Swiftly gliding in, blushing like a girl, a tall, thin stripling held out both his hands; and although I could hardly believe, as I looked at his flushed, feminine, and artless face, that it could be the poet, I returned his warm pressure. After the ordinary greetings and courtesies he sat down and listened. I was silent from astonishment: was it possible this mild-looking, beardless boy, could be the veritable monster at war with all the world? — excommunicated by the Fathers of the Church, deprived of his civil rights by the fiat of a grim Lord Chancellor, discarded by every member of his family, and denounced by the rival sages of our literature as the founder of a Satanic school? I could not believe it; it must be a hoax. He was habited like a boy, in a black jacket and trousers, which he seemed to have outgrown, or his tailor, as is the custom, had most shamefully stinted him in his 'sizings.' Mrs. Williams saw my embarrassment, and to relieve me asked Shelley what book he had in his hand? His face brightened, and he answered briskly, —

"'Calderon's "Magico Prodigioso" — I am translating some passages in it.'

"'Oh, read it to us.'

"Shoved off from the shore of commonplace incidents that could not interest him, and fairly launched on a theme that did, he instantly became oblivious of everything but the book in his hand. The masterly manner in which he analysed the genius of the author, his lucid interpretation of the story, and the ease with which he translated into our language the most subtle and imaginative passages of the Spanish poet, were marvellous, as was his command of the two languages. After this touch of his quality I no longer doubted his identity; a dead silence ensued; looking up, I asked, —

“‘Where is he?’

“Mrs. Williams said, ‘Who? Shelley? Oh, he comes and goes like a spirit, no one knows when or where.’”

Two little incidents which happened in the winter of 1821-2 deserve to be recorded. News reached the Pisan circle early in December that a man who had insulted the Host at Lucca was sentenced to be burned. Shelley proposed that the English — himself, Byron, Medwin, and their friend Mr. Taafe — should immediately arm and ride off to rescue him. The scheme took Byron’s fancy; but they agreed to try less Quixotic measures before they had recourse to force, and their excitement was calmed by hearing that the man’s sentence had been commuted to the galleys. The other affair brought them less agreeably into contact with the Tuscan police. The party were riding home one afternoon in March, when a mounted dragoon came rushing by, breaking their ranks and nearly unhorsing Mr. Taafe. Byron and Shelley rode after him to remonstrate; but the man struck Shelley from his saddle with a sabre blow. The English then pursued him into Pisa, making such a clatter that one of Byron’s servants issued with a pitchfork from the Casa Lanfranchi, and wounded the fellow somewhat seriously, under the impression that it was necessary to defend his master. Shelley called the whole matter “a trifling piece of business;” but it was strictly investigated by the authorities; and though the dragoon was found to have been in the wrong, Byron had to retire for a season to Leghorn. Another consequence was the exile of Count Gamba and his father from Tuscany, which led to Byron’s final departure from Pisa.

The even current of Shelley’s life was not often broken by such adventures. Trelawny gives the following account of how he passed his days: he “was up at six or seven, reading Plato, Sophocles, or Spinoza, with the accompaniment of a hunch of dry bread; then he joined Williams in a sail on the Arno, in a flat-bottomed skiff, book in hand, and from thence he went to the pine-forest, or some out-of-the-way place. When the birds went to roost he returned home, and talked and read until midnight.” The great wood of stone pines on the Pisan Maremma was his favourite study. Trelawny tells us how he found him there alone one day, and in what state was the manuscript of that prettiest lyric, “Ariel, to Miranda take”. “It was a frightful scrawl; words smeared out with his finger, and one upon the other, over and over in tiers, and all run together in most ‘admired disorder;’ it might have been taken for a sketch of a marsh overgrown with bulrushes,

and the blots for wild ducks; such a dashed-off daub as self-conceited artists mistake for a manifestation of genius. On my observing this to him, he answered, ‘When my brain gets heated with thought, it soon boils, and throws off images and words faster than I can skim them off. In the morning, when cooled down, out of the rude sketch as you justly call it, I shall attempt a drawing.”

A daily visit to Byron diversified existence. Byron talked more sensibly with Shelley than with his commonplace acquaintances; and when he began to gossip, Shelley retired into his own thoughts. Then they would go pistol-shooting, Byron’s trembling hand contrasting with his friend’s firmness. They had invented a “little language” for this sport: firing was called tiring; hitting, colping; missing, mancating, etc. It was in fact a kind of pigeon Italian. Shelley acquired two nick-names in the circle of his Pisan friends, both highly descriptive. He was Ariel and the Snake. The latter suited him because of his noiseless gliding movement, bright eyes, and ethereal diet. It was first given to him by Byron during a reading of “Faust”. When he came to the line of Mephistopheles, “Wie meine Muhme, die beruhmte Schlange,” and translated it, “My aunt, the renowned Snake,” Byron cried, “Then you are her nephew.” Shelley by no means resented the epithet. Indeed he alludes to it in his letters, and in a poem already referred to above.

Soon after Trelawny’s arrival the party turned their thoughts to nautical affairs. Shelley had already done a good deal of boating with Williams on the Arno and the Serchio, and had on one occasion nearly lost his life by the capsizing of their tiny craft. They now determined to build a larger yacht for excursions on the sea; while Byron, liking the project of a summer residence upon the Bay of Spezia, made up his mind to have one too. Shelley’s was to be an open boat carrying sail, Byron’s a large decked schooner. The construction of both was entrusted to a Genoese builder, under the direction of Trelawny’s friend, Captain Roberts. Such was the birth of the ill-fated “Don Juan”, which cost the lives of Shelley and Willliams, and of the “Bolivar”, which carried Byron off to Genoa before he finally set sail for Greece. Captain Roberts was allowed to have his own way about the latter; but Shelley and Williams had set their hearts upon a model for their little yacht, which did not suit the Captain’s notions of sea-worthiness. Williams overruled his objections, and the “Don Juan” was built according to his cherished fancy. “When it was finished,” says Trelawny, “it

took two tons of iron ballast to bring her down to her bearings, and then she was very crank in a breeze, though not deficient in beam. She was fast, strongly built, and Torbay rigged." She was christened by Lord Byron, not wholly with Shelley's approval; and one young English sailor, Charles Vivian, in addition to Williams and Shelley, formed her crew. "It was great fun," says Trelawny, "to witness Williams teaching the poet how to steer, and other points of seamanship. As usual, Shelley had a book in hand, saying he could read and steer at the same time, as one was mental, the other mechanical." "The boy was quick and handy, and used to boats. Williams was not as deficient as I anticipated, but over-anxious, and wanted practice, which alone makes a man prompt in emergency. Shelley was intent on catching images from the ever-changing sea and sky; he heeded not the boat."

CHAPTER 7. LAST DAYS.

The advance of spring made the climate of Pisa too hot for comfort; and early in April Trelawny and Williams rode off to find a suitable lodging for themselves and the Shelleys on the Gulf of Spezia. They pitched upon a house called the Villa Magni, between Lerici and San Terenzio, which "looked more like a boat or a bathing-house than a place to live in. It consisted of a terrace or ground-floor unpaved, and used for storing boat-gear and fishing-tackle, and of a single storey over it, divided into a hall or saloon and four small rooms, which had once been white-washed; there was one chimney for cooking. This place we thought the Shelleys might put up with for the summer. The only good thing about it was a verandah facing the sea, and almost over it." When it came to be inhabited, the central hall was used for the living and eating room of the whole party. The Shelleys occupied two rooms facing each other; the Williamses had one of the remaining chambers, and Trelawny another. Access to these smaller apartments could only be got through the saloon; and this circumstance once gave rise to a ludicrous incident, when Shelley, having lost his clothes out bathing, had to cross, in puris naturalibus, not undetected, though covered in his retreat by the clever Italian handmaiden, through a luncheon party assembled in the dining-room. The horror of the ladies at the poet's unexpected apparition and his innocent self-defence are well described by Trelawny. Life in the villa was of the simplest description. To get food was no easy matter; and the style of the furniture may be guessed by Trelawny's laconic remark that the sea was his only washing-basin.

They arrived at Villa Magni on the 26th of April, and began a course of life which was not interrupted till the final catastrophe of July 8. These few weeks were in many respects the happiest of Shelley's life. We seem to discern in his last letter of importance, recently edited by Mr. Garnett, that he was now conscious of having reached a platform from which he could survey his past achievement, and whence he would probably have risen to a loftier altitude, by a calmer and more equable exercise of powers which had been ripening during the last three years of life in Italy. Meanwhile, "I am content," he writes, "if the heaven above me is calm for the passing moment." And this tranquillity was perfect, with none of the oppressive sense of coming danger, which distinguishes the calm before a storm. He

was far away from the distractions of the world he hated, in a scene of indescribable beauty, among a population little removed from the state of savages, who enjoyed the primitive pleasures of a race at one with nature, and toiled with hardy perseverance on the element he loved so well. His company was thoroughly congenial and well mixed. He spent his days in excursions on the water with Williams, or in solitary musings in his cranky little skiff, floating upon the shallows in shore, or putting out to sea and waiting for the landward breeze to bring him home. The evenings were passed upon the terrace, listening to Jane's guitar, conversing with Trelawny, or reading his favourite poets aloud to the assembled party.

In this delightful solitude, this round of simple occupations, this uninterrupted communion with nature, Shelley's enthusiasms and inspirations revived with their old strength. He began a poem, which, if we may judge of its scale by the fragment we possess, would have been one of the longest, as it certainly is one of the loftiest of his masterpieces. The "Triumph of Life" is composed in no strain of compliment to the powers of this world, which quell untameable spirits, and enslave the noblest by the operation of blind passions and inordinate ambitions. It is rather a pageant of the spirit dragged in chains, led captive to the world, the flesh and the devil. The sonorous march and sultry splendour of the terza rima stanzas, bearing on their tide of song those multitudes of forms, processionally grand, yet misty with the dust of their own tramplings, and half-shrouded in a lurid robe of light, affect the imagination so powerfully that we are fain to abandon criticism and acknowledge only the daemonic fascinations of this solemn mystery. Some have compared the "Triumph of Life" to a Panathenaic pomp: others have found in it a reflex of the burning summer heat, and blazing sea, and onward undulations of interminable waves, which were the cradle of its maker as he wrote. The imagery of Dante plays a part, and Dante has controlled the structure. The genius of the Revolution passes by: Napoleon is there, and Rousseau serves for guide. The great of all ages are arraigned, and the spirit of the world is brought before us, while its heroes pass, unveil their faces for a moment, and are swallowed in the throng that has no ending. But how Shelley meant to solve the problems he has raised, by what sublime philosophy he purposed to resolve the discords of this revelation more soul-shattering than Daniel's "Mene", we cannot even guess. The poem, as we have it, breaks abruptly with these words: "Then what is Life? I cried" — a sentence of the profoundest import, when

we remember that the questioner was now about to seek its answer in the halls of Death.

To separate any single passage from a poem which owes so much of its splendour to the continuity of music and the succession of visionary images, does it cruel wrong. Yet this must be attempted; for Shelley is the only English poet who has successfully handled that most difficult of metres, terza rima. His power over complicated versification cannot be appreciated except by duly noticing the method he employed in treating a structure alien, perhaps, to the genius of our literature, and even in Italian used with perfect mastery by none but Dante. To select the introduction and part of the first paragraph will inflict less violence upon the "Triumph of Life" as a whole, than to detach one of its episodes.

Swift as a spirit hastening to his task
Of glory and of good, the Sun sprang forth
Rejoicing in his splendour, and the mask

Of darkness fell from the awakened Earth.
The smokeless altars of the mountain snows
Flamed above crimson clouds, and at the birth

Of light, the Ocean's orison arose,
To which the birds tempered their matin lay.
All flowers in field or forest which unclose

Their trembling eyelids to the kiss of day,
Swinging their censers in the element,
With orient incense lit by the new ray,

Burned slow and inconsumably, and sent
Their odorous sighs up to the smiling air;
And, in succession due, did continent,

Isle, ocean, and all things that in them wear
The form and character of mortal mould,
Rise as the Sun their father rose, to bear

Their portion of the toil, which he of old
Took as his own, and then imposed on them.
But I, whom thoughts which must remain untold

Had kept as wakeful as the stars that gem
The cone of night, now they were laid asleep,
Stretched my faint limbs beneath the hoary stem

Which an old chestnut flung athwart the steep
Of a green Apennine. Before me fled
The night; behind me rose the day; the deep

Was at my feet, and Heaven above my head, —
When a strange trance over my fancy grew
Which was not slumber, for the shade it spread

Was so transparent that the scene came through
As clear as, when a veil of light is drawn
O'er evening hills, they glimmer; and I knew

That I had felt the freshness of that dawn
Bathe in the same cold dew my brow and hair,
And sate as thus upon that slope of lawn

Under the self-same bough, and heard as there
The birds, the fountains, and the ocean, hold
Sweet talk in music through the enamoured air.
And then a vision on my brain was rolled.

Such is the exordium of the poem. It will be noticed that at this point one series of the interwoven triplets is concluded. The "Triumph of Life" itself begins with a new series of rhymes, describing the vision for which preparation has been made in the preceding prelude. It is not without perplexity that an ear unaccustomed to the windings of the terza rima, feels its way among them. Entangled and impeded by the labyrinthine sounds, the reader might be compared to one who, swimming in his dreams, is carried down the course of a swift river clogged with clinging and retarding

water-weeds. He moves; but not without labour: yet after a while the very obstacles add fascination to his movement.

As in that trance of wondrous thought I lay,
This was the tenour of my waking dream: —
Methought I sate beside a public way

Thick strewn with summer dust, and a great stream
Of people there was hurrying to and fro,
Numerous as gnats upon the evening gleam,

All hastening onward, yet none seemed to know
Whither he went, or whence he came, or why
He made one of the multitude, and so

Was borne amid the crowd, as through the sky
One of the million leaves of summer's bier;
Old age and youth, manhood and infancy,

Mixed in one mighty torrent did appear:
Some flying from the thing they feared, and some
Seeking the object of another's fear;

And others, as with steps towards the tomb,
Pored on the trodden worms that crawled beneath,
And others mournfully within the gloom

Of their own shadow walked and called it death;
And some fled from it as it were a ghost,
Half fainting in the affliction of vain breath.

But more, with motions which each other crossed,
Pursued or spurned the shadows the clouds threw,
Or birds within the noon-day ether lost,

Upon that path where flowers never grew —
And weary with vain toil and faint for thirst,
Heard not the fountains, whose melodious dew

Out of their mossy cells for ever burst;
Nor felt the breeze which from the forest told
Of grassy paths, and wood-lawn interspersed,

With over-arching elms, and caverns cold,
And violet banks where sweet dreams brood; — but they
Pursued their serious folly as of old.

Here let us break the chain of rhymes that are unbroken in the text, to notice the extraordinary skill with which the rhythm has been woven in one paragraph, suggesting by recurrences of sound the passing of a multitude, which is presented at the same time to the eye of fancy by accumulated images. The next eleven triplets introduce the presiding genius of the pageant. Students of Petrarch's "Trionfi" will not fail to note what Shelley owes to that poet, and how he has transmuted the definite imagery of mediaeval symbolism into something metaphysical and mystic.

And as I gazed, methought that in the way
The throng grew wilder, as the woods of June
When the south wind shakes the extinguished day;

And a cold glare, intenser than the noon
But icy cold, obscured with blinding light
The sun, as he the stars. Like the young moon —

When on the sunlit limits of the night
Her white shell trembles amid crimson air,
And whilst the sleeping tempest gathers might, —

Doth, as the herald of its coming, bear
The ghost of its dead mother, whose dim form
Bends in dark ether from her infant's chair;

So came a chariot on the silent storm
Of its own rushing splendour, and a Shape
So sate within, as one whom years deform,

Beneath a dusky hood and double cape,
Crouching within the shadow of a tomb.
And o'er what seemed the head a cloud-like crape

Was bent, a dun and faint ethereal gloom
Tempering the light. Upon the chariot beam
A Janus-visaged Shadow did assume

The guidance of that wonder-winged team;
The shapes which drew it in thick lightnings
Were lost: — I heard alone on the air's soft stream

The music of their ever-moving wings.
All the four faces of that charioteer
Had their eyes banded; little profit brings

Speed in the van and blindness in the rear,
Nor then avail the beams that quench the sun,
Or that with banded eyes could pierce the sphere

Of all that is, has been, or will be done.
So ill was the car guided — but it past
With solemn speed majestically on.

The intense stirring of his imagination implied by this supreme poetic effort, the solitude of the Villa Magni, and the elemental fervour of Italian heat to which he recklessly exposed himself, contributed to make Shelley more than usually nervous. His somnambulism returned, and he saw visions. On one occasion he thought that the dead Allegra rose from the sea, and clapped her hands, and laughed, and beckoned to him. On another he roused the whole house at night by his screams, and remained terror-frozen in the trance produced by an appalling vision. This mood he communicated, in some measure, to his friends. One of them saw what she afterwards believed to have been his phantom, and another dreamed that he was dead. They talked much of death, and it is noticeable that the last words written to him by Jane were these:—"Are you going to join your friend Plato?"

The Leigh Hunts arrived at last in Genoa, whence they again sailed for Leghorn. Shelley heard the news upon the 20th of June. He immediately

prepared to join them; and on the 1st of July set off with Williams in the "Don Juan" for Leghorn, where he rushed into the arms of his old friend. Leigh Hunt, in his autobiography, writes, "I will not dwell upon the moment." From Leghorn he drove with the Hunts to Pisa, and established them in the ground-floor of Byron's Palazzo Lanfranchi, as comfortably as was consistent with his lordship's variable moods. The negotiations which had preceded Hunt's visit to Italy, raised forebodings in Shelley's mind as to the reception he would meet from Byron; nor were these destined to be unfulfilled. Trelawny tells us how irksome the poet found it to have "a man with a sick wife, and seven disorderly children," established in his palace. To Mrs. Hunt he was positively brutal; nor could he tolerate her self-complacent husband, who, while he had voyaged far and wide in literature, had never wholly cast the slough of Cockneyism. Hunt was himself hardly powerful enough to understand the true magnitude of Shelley, though he loved him; and the tender solicitude of the great, unselfish Shelley, for the smaller, harmlessly conceited Hunt, is pathetic. They spent a pleasant day or two together, Shelley showing the Campo Santo and other sights of Pisa to his English friend. Hunt thought him somewhat less hopeful than he used to be, but improved in health and strength and spirits. One little touch relating to their last conversation, deserves to be recorded:—"He assented warmly to an opinion I expressed in the cathedral at Pisa, while the organ was playing, that a truly divine religion might yet be established, if charity were really made the principle of it, instead of faith."

On the night following that day of rest, Shelley took a postchaise for Leghorn; and early in the afternoon of the next day he set sail, with Williams, on his return voyage to Lerici. The sailor-boy, Charles Vivian, was their only companion. Trelawny, who was detained on board the "Bolivar", in the Leghorn harbour, watched them start. The weather for some time had been unusually hot and dry. "Processions of priests and religiosi have been for several days past praying for rain;" so runs the last entry in Williams's diary; "but the gods are either angry or nature too powerful." Trelawny's Genoese mate observed, as the "Don Juan" stood out to sea, that they ought to have started at three a.m. instead of twelve hours later; adding "the devil is brewing mischief." Then a sea-fog withdrew the "Don Juan" from their sight. It was an oppressively sultry afternoon. Trelawny went down into his cabin, and slept; but was soon roused by the noise of the ships' crews in the harbour making all ready for a gale. In a

short time the tempest was upon them, with wind, rain, and thunder. It did not last more than twenty minutes; and at its end Trelawny looked out anxiously for Shelley's boat. She was nowhere to be seen, and nothing could be heard of her. In fact, though Trelawny could not then be absolutely sure of the catastrophe, she had sunk, struck in all probability by the prow of a felucca, but whether by accident or with the intention of running her down is still uncertain.

On the morning of the third day after the storm, Trelawny rode to Pisa, and communicated his fears to Hunt. "I then went upstairs to Byron. When I told him, his lip quivered, and his voice faltered as he questioned me." Couriers were despatched to search the sea-coast, and to bring the "Bolivar" from Leghorn. Trelawny rode in person toward Via Reggio, and there found a punt, a water-keg, and some bottles, which had been in Shelley's boat. A week passed, Trelawny patrolling the shore with the coast-guardsmen, but hearing of no new discovery, until at last two bodies were cast upon the sand. One found near the Via Reggio, on the 18th of July, was Shelley's. It had his jacket, "with the volume of Aeschylus in one pocket, and Keats's poems in the other, doubled back, as if the reader, in the act of reading, had hastily thrust it away." The other, found near the tower of Migliarino, at about four miles' distance, was that of Williams. The sailor-boy, Charles Vivian, though cast up on the same day, the 18th of July, near Massa, was not heard of by Trelawny till the 29th.

Nothing now remained but to tell the whole dreadful truth to the two widowed women, who had spent the last days in an agony of alternate despair and hope at Villa Magni. This duty Trelawny discharged faithfully and firmly. "The next day I prevailed on them," he says, "to return with me to Pisa. The misery of that night and the journey of the next day, and of many days and nights that followed, I can neither describe nor forget." It was decided that Shelley should be buried at Rome, near his friend Keats and his son William, and that Williams's remains should be taken to England. But first the bodies had to be burned; and for permission to do this Trelawny, who all through had taken the lead, applied to the English Embassy at Florence. After some difficulty it was granted.

What remains to be said concerning the cremation of Shelley's body on the 6th of August, must be told in Trelawny's own words. Williams, it may be stated, had been burned on the preceding day.

“Three white wands had been stuck in the sand to mark the poet’s grave, but as they were at some distance from each other, we had to cut a trench thirty yards in length, in the line of the sticks, to ascertain the exact spot, and it was nearly an hour before we came upon the grave.

“In the meantime Byron and Leigh Hunt arrived in the carriage, attended by soldiers, and the Health Officer, as before. The lonely and grand scenery that surrounded us, so exactly harmonized with Shelley’s genius, that I could imagine his spirit soaring over us. The sea, with the islands of Gorgona, Capraja, and Elba, was before us; old battlemented watch-towers stretched along the coast, backed by the marble-crested Apennines glistening in the sun, picturesque from their diversified outlines, and not a human dwelling was in sight.

“As I thought of the delight Shelley felt in such scenes of loneliness and grandeur whilst living, I felt we were no better than a herd of wolves or a pack of wild dogs, in tearing out his battered and naked body from the pure yellow sand that lay so lightly over it, to drag him back to the light of day; but the dead have no voice, nor had I power to check the sacrilege — the work went on silently in the deep and unresisting sand, not a word was spoken, for the Italians have a touch of sentiment, and their feelings are easily excited into sympathy. Byron was silent and thoughtful. We were startled and drawn together by a dull, hollow sound that followed the blow of a mattock; the iron had struck a skull, and the body was soon uncovered.... After the fire was well kindled we repeated the ceremony of the previous day; and more wine was poured over Shelley’s dead body than he had consumed during his life. This with the oil and salt made the yellow flames glisten and quiver. The heat from the sun and fire was so intense that the atmosphere was tremulous and wavy.... The fire was so fierce as to produce a white heat on the iron, and to reduce its contents to grey ashes. The only portions that were not consumed were some fragments of bones, the jaw, and the skull; but what surprised us all was that the heart remained entire. In snatching this relic from the fiery furnace, my hand was severely burnt; and had any one seen me do the act, I should have been put into quarantine.”

Shelley’s heart was given to Hunt, who subsequently, not without reluctance and unseemly dispute, resigned it to Mrs. Shelley. It is now at Boscombe. His ashes were carried by Trelawny to Rome and buried in the Protestant cemetery, so touchingly described by him in his letter to Peacock,

and afterwards so sublimely in “Adonais”. The epitaph, composed by Hunt, ran thus: “Percy Bysshe Shelley, Cor Cordium, Natus iv. August MDCCXCII. Obiit VIII Jul. MDCCCXXII.” To the Latin words Trelawny, faithfullest and most devoted of friends, added three lines from Ariel’s song, much loved in life by Shelley:

Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.

“And so,” writes Lady Shelley, “the sea and the earth closed over one who was great as a poet, and still greater as a philanthropist; and of whom it may be said, that his wild spiritual character seems to have prepared him for being thus snatched from life under circumstances of mingled terror and beauty, while his powers were yet in their spring freshness, and age had not come to render the ethereal body decrepit, or to wither the heart which could not be consumed by fire.”

CHAPTER 8. EPILOGUE.

After some deliberation I decided to give this little work on Shelley the narrative rather than the essay form, impelled thereto by one commanding reason. Shelley's life and his poetry are indissolubly connected. He acted what he thought and felt, with a directness rare among his brethren of the poet's craft; while his verse, with the exception of "The Cenci", expressed little but the animating thoughts and aspirations of his life. That life, moreover, was "a miracle of thirty years," so crowded with striking incident and varied experience that, as he said himself, he had already lived longer than his father, and ought to be reckoned with the men of ninety. Through all vicissitudes he preserved his youth inviolate, and died, like one whom the gods love, or like a hero of Hellenic story, young, despite grey hairs and suffering. His life has, therefore, to be told, in order that his life-work may be rightly valued: for, great as that was, he, the man, was somehow greater; and noble as it truly is, the memory of him is nobler.

To the world he presented the rare spectacle of a man passionate for truth, and unreservedly obedient to the right as he discerned it. The anomaly which made his practical career a failure, lay just here. The right he followed was too often the antithesis of ordinary morality: in his desire to cast away the false and grasp the true, he overshot the mark of prudence. The blending in him of a pure and earnest purpose with moral and social theories that could not but have proved pernicious to mankind at large, produced at times an almost grotesque mixture in his actions no less than in his verse. We cannot, therefore, wonder that society, while he lived, felt the necessity of asserting itself against him. But now that he has passed into the company of the great dead, and time has softened down the asperities of popular judgment, we are able to learn the real lesson of his life and writings. That is not to be sought in any of his doctrines, but rather in his fearless bearing, his resolute loyalty to an unselfish and in the simplest sense benevolent ideal. It is this which constitutes his supreme importance for us English at the present time. Ours is an age in which ideals are rare, and we belong to a race in which men who follow them so single-heartedly are not common.

As a poet, Shelley contributed a new quality to English literature — a quality of ideality, freedom, and spiritual audacity, which severe critics of

other nations think we lack. Byron's daring is in a different region: his elemental worldliness and pungent satire do not liberate our energies, or cheer us with new hopes and splendid vistas. Wordsworth, the very antithesis to Shelley in his reverent accord with institutions, suits our meditative mood, sustains us with a sound philosophy, and braces us by healthy contact with the Nature he so dearly loved. But in Wordsworth there is none of Shelley's magnetism. $What remains of permanent value in Coleridge's poetry — such work as "Christabel", the "Ancient Mariner", or "Kubla Khan" — is a product of pure artistic fancy, tempered by the author's mysticism. Keats, true and sacred poet as he was, loved Nature with a somewhat sensuous devotion. She was for him a mistress rather than a Diotima; nor did he share the prophetic fire which burns in Shelley's verse, quite apart from the direct enunciation of his favourite tenets. In none of Shelley's greatest contemporaries was the lyrical faculty so paramount; and whether we consider his minor songs, his odes, or his more complicated choral dramas, we acknowledge that he was the loftiest and the most spontaneous singer of our language. In range of power he was also conspicuous above the rest. Not only did he write the best lyrics, but the best tragedy, the best translations, and the best familiar poems of his century. As a satirist and humourist, I cannot place him so high as some of his admirers do; and the purely polemical portions of his poems, those in which he puts forth his antagonism to tyrants and religions and custom in all its myriad forms, seem to me to degenerate at intervals into poor rhetoric.

While his genius was so varied and its flight so unapproached in swiftness, it would be vain to deny that Shelley, as an artist, had faults from which the men with whom I have compared him were more free. The most prominent of these are haste, incoherence, verbal carelessness, incompleteness, a want of narrative force, and a weak hold on objective realities. Even his warmest admirers, if they are sincere critics, will concede that his verse, taken altogether, is marked by inequality. In his eager self-abandonment to inspiration, he produced much that is unsatisfying simply because it is not ripe. There was no defect of power in him, but a defect of patience; and the final word to be pronounced in estimating the larger bulk of his poetry is the word immature. Not only was the poet young; but the fruit of his young mind had been plucked before it had been duly mellowed by reflection. Again, he did not care enough for common things to present

them with artistic fulness. He was intolerant of detail, and thus failed to model with the roundness that we find in Goethe's work. He flew at the grand, the spacious, the sublime; and did not always succeed in realizing for his readers what he had imagined. A certain want of faith in his own powers, fostered by the extraordinary discouragement under which he had to write, prevented him from finishing what he began, or from giving that ultimate form of perfection to his longer works which we admire in shorter pieces like the "Ode to the West Wind". When a poem was ready, he had it hastily printed, and passed on to fresh creative efforts. If anything occurred to interrupt his energy, he flung the sketch aside. Some of these defects, if we may use this word at all to indicate our sense that Shelley might by care have been made equal to his highest self, were in a great measure the correlative of his chief quality — the ideality, of which I have already spoken. He composed with all his faculties, mental, emotional, and physical, at the utmost strain, at a white heat of intense fervour, striving to attain one object, the truest and most passionate investiture for the thoughts which had inflamed his ever-quick imagination. The result is that his finest work has more the stamp of something natural and elemental — the wind, the sea, the depth of air — than of a mere artistic product. Plato would have said: the Muses filled this man with sacred madness, and, when he wrote, he was no longer in his own control. There was, moreover, ever-present in his nature an effort, an aspiration after a better than the best this world can show, which prompted him to blend the choicest products of his thought and fancy with the fairest images borrowed from the earth on which he lived. He never willingly composed except under the impulse to body forth a vision of the love and light and life which was the spirit of the power he worshipped. This persistent upward striving, this earnestness, this passionate intensity, this piety of soul and purity of inspiration, give a quite unique spirituality to his poems. But it cannot be expected that the colder perfections of Academic art should always be found in them. They have something of the waywardness and negligence of nature, something of the asymmetreia we admire in the earlier creations of Greek architecture. That Shelley, acute critic and profound student as he was, could conform himself to rule and show himself an artist in the stricter sense, is, however, abundantly proved by "The Cenci" and by "Adonais". The reason why he did not always observe this method will be understood by those who have

studied his “Defence of Poetry”, and learned to sympathize with his impassioned theory of art.

Working on this small scale, it is difficult to do barest justice to Shelley’s life or poetry. The materials for the former are almost overwhelmingly copious and strangely discordant. Those who ought to meet in love over his grave, have spent their time in quarrelling about him, and baffling the most eager seeker for the truth. (See Lady Shelley v. Hogg; Trelawny v. the Shelley family; Peacock v. Lady Shelley; Garnett v. Peacock; Garnett v. Trelawny; McCarthy v. Hogg, etc., etc.) Through the turbid atmosphere of their recriminations it is impossible to discern the whole personality of the man. By careful comparison and refined manipulation of the biographical treasures at our disposal, a fair portrait of Shelley might still be set before the reader with the accuracy of a finished picture. That labour of exquisite art and of devoted love still remains to be accomplished, though in the meantime Mr. W.M. Rossetti’s Memoir is a most valuable instalment. Shelley in his lifetime bound those who knew him with a chain of loyal affection, impressing observers so essentially different as Hogg, Byron, Peacock, Leigh Hunt, Trelawny, Medwin, Williams, with the conviction that he was the gentlest, purest, bravest, and most spiritual being they had ever met. The same conviction is forced upon his biographer. During his four last years this most loveable of men was becoming gradually riper, wiser, truer to his highest instincts. The imperfections of his youth were being rapidly absorbed. His self-knowledge was expanding, his character mellowing, and his genius growing daily stronger. Without losing the fire that burned in him, he had been lessoned by experience into tempering its fervour; and when he reached the age of twenty-nine, he stood upon the height of his most glorious achievement, ready to unfold his wings for a yet sublimer flight. At that moment, when life at last seemed about to offer him rest, unimpeded activity, and happiness, death robbed the world of his maturity. Posterity has but the product of his cruder years, the assurance that he had already outlived them into something nobler, and the tragedy of his untimely end.

If a final word were needed to utter the unutterable sense of waste excited in us by Shelley’s premature absorption into the mystery of the unknown, we might find it in the last lines of his own “Alastor”: —

Art and eloquence,
And all the shows o' the world, are frail and vain
To weep a loss that turns their light to shade.
It is a woe "too deep for tears," when all
Is reft at once, when some surpassing spirit,
Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves
Those who remain behind nor sobs nor groans,
The passionate tumult of a clinging hope;
But pale despair and cold tranquillity,
Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
Birth and the grave, that are not as they were.

THE END

Lerici, close to where the poet died. On 8 July 1822, less than a month before his 30th birthday, Shelley drowned in a sudden storm while sailing back from Livorno to Lerici in his schooner 'Don Juan'.

‘The Funeral of Shelley’ by Louis Édouard Fournier (1889). Shelley’s body had washed ashore and was speedily cremated on the beach, in keeping with quarantine regulations.

The Shelley Memorial at University College, Oxford, depicting a reclining statue of Shelley's body washed up on the shore